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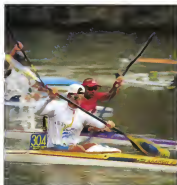
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Grant Dixon

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# Peddling myths and dreams

The days of mass marketing of wilderness activities are numbered

**AN ARTICLE BY DAVID NICHOLSON-LORD** reprinted from the esteemed UK journal *New Statesman* in *The Australian Financial Review* on the last day of 2002 argues that in the present turmoil the idea of the Western traveller trying to 'find oneself' in the Third World is in questionable taste. In particular, Nicholson-Lord questions the long-held and almost universal '...assumption that well-brought-up Westerners have an absolute right to travel wherever they wish'. He reasons that the modern mass-tourism industry has been a highly successful pedlar of the myths

Douglas in north Queensland; and the pollution of alpine rivers with sewage from ski resorts including Victoria's Dinner Plain.

While these continue unchecked, during the last 20 years, a new form of commercial development has been added to the list—the marketing of wilderness activities by the modern mass-tourism industry which has increasingly included government as well as private enterprise. However, in peddling the 'myths and dreams' of wilderness activities for consumption by the mass market, the industry is faced with two problems: first,

and other 'amenities' have been constructed 'to save visitors from themselves' and to make wilderness accessible to all comers. And it doesn't end there. Armies of rangers and other staff, mountains of interpretative material, and a jungle of rules, regulations and fees have to be negotiated *en route* to a wilderness experience.

These activities have as much chance of achieving their stated objectives as ancient alchemists had in turning lead into gold, or the alchemists' 'scientific' colleagues had in proving that the earth is flat. These misguided characters of old were relatively harmless. Their modern-day equals—government land managers and bureaucrats—are unwilling and/or unable to accept that such wilderness 'development' is an oxymoron; that, in fact, they are destroying what they profess to make available to the mass market—wilderness.

'Wilderness experiences' are on a continuum—from brief, uncommitted 'dabbles' at the fringe of civilisation to extended forays in the most hostile places on earth. If we attempt to bring the latter down to our level of strength, fitness, skill, experience and commitment we simply destroy those qualities that make them wilderness. Put simply, wilderness can never be for everyone. Some of it is, and will continue to be, beyond our reach. That's simply the way it is, and we'd better get used to it. Alternatively, we can allow wilderness to continue to be cut down to our level until, ultimately, there is none left. ☹

Chris Baxter

## 'Millions...have been wasted in the futile pursuit of idiot proofing the bush.'

and dreams that Western travellers '...can escape, from the grimy and pressured routine of their lives to distant paradises and wildernesses where reality is suspended, miracles occur and the ends of rainbows are located'.

The huge, largely one-way traffic from the developed to the developing world has inevitably resulted in stresses, according to Nicholson-Lord. These include the submergence of local culture and religion, inappropriate land use (for hotels and the like), the displacement of labour from traditional agriculture (to tourism) service industries, and Coca-colonisation. As few locals benefit from such developments, and tourists appear wealthy, ignorant and insensitive, it is not surprising that there is resentment—and recently, violent retaliation—from populations in the developing world. They see tourism as the cutting edge of Western development and that—like much Western development—it doesn't work.

A similar case can be made regarding our own natural resources. Since the beginning of European occupation, this continent's natural resources have been considered vast—almost limitless—assets; to be cut down, burnt, cleared, mined, drained, flooded, sold off and polluted in the pursuit of material well-being. Countless examples of the results of this attitude have been reported in *Wild*, and elsewhere, for decades. They include the clear-felling of native forests from south-west Western Australia to north Queensland; burning central New South Wales forests for charcoal; uranium mining in Kakadu; draining the Snowy River; flooding Lake Pedder; uncontrolled coastal property development from Portland in western Victoria to Port

the wilderness that remains is mostly still wilderness because its climate and/or geography have made human interference more difficult and less appealing and, secondly, not everyone has the physical and mental resources to safely experience what lies beyond the fringes of civilisation.

The effective marketing and public relations of 'myths and dreams' goes a long way towards addressing both problems. Notwithstanding the scarcity of such places near road heads—not to mention the problem of becoming crocodile fodder—images of romping with an attractive partner in a clear pool beneath a waterfall sell wilderness activities as effectively as they sell everything from cigarettes to condoms. The 'bush experience' is commonly represented by images of mooning couples lolling in Elysian Fields of wild flowers stretching to a blue horizon, or of happy families unencumbered by more than a single day-pack marvelling at 200-year-old forest giants from graded tracks. Rucksacks, rain, steep climbs, mud, scrub and searing heat don't rate a mention.

It's one thing to sell 'em the idea of wilderness activities, but what happens when they get there? We don't want a lot of disappointed punters or, worse, angry punters hell bent on suing our pants off because young Shane runs over the edge of a cliff or Gaylene is mauled by a rogue 'roo startled by her dragon tat!

So, we'll make it safe and easy for 'em!

Therein, of course, lies the rub. Millions of hours of land managers' time—and far more taxpayer dollars—have been wasted in the futile pursuit of idiot proofing the bush. Countless roads, car parks, tracks, camp-sites and accommodation, barriers, signs, toilets

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# office politics

Green Pages too Green

**WILD'S SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL** issues is clear, unequivocal and wholeheartedly supported by its readership. In a world in which passionate advocacy is increasingly constrained by commercial imperatives, *Wild's* fearless defence of wilderness areas is needed more than ever.

However, of late *Wild's* editorial team seems to have adopted the position that support for the environment inevitably translates to uncritical support for a particular political party. You have expressed jubilation at the election of Greens Party candidates (*Wild* no 87), labelled the Victorian Labor Government 'rednecks' (no 85) and have presented an unashamed hagiography of Greens Party leader, Bob Brown (no 72). It is now apparent that the Green Pages are compiled by Bob Brown's office.

For the environment movement, engagement with parliamentary politics is inevitable. But even within the environment movement there are multiple perspectives on the politics of the environment, and an even greater number of strategies adopted. Some environmentalists aim to influence the major parties through lobbying and campaigning. Some do so more quietly by working within the major parties. And others put their energy into campaigning for the minor parties.

Analysis of political parties—both major and minor—invariably reveals the simultaneous existence of idealism, cynicism, compromise and pragmatism. If there is a defining feature of politics it is complexity. Denial of this complexity does not serve the longer term interests of the environment movement.

You owe it to your readers' intelligence to present the multiplicity of positions within the environment movement. And if you choose to present the views of one political party or another, you owe it to your readership to do so with a critical eye. A mature readership is more than capable of digesting conflicting arguments and making up its own mind.

Just as *Wild's* credibility depends on maintaining an editorial position independent of advertisers, it is important that *Wild* not appear to become the mouthpiece of any one political party.

Of course it is your prerogative to put a case strongly in favour of one position or another, or one party or another, but to do so without first having the debate is patronising, perhaps even counterproductive.

Andrew Wear  
Carlton Nth, Vic

*Wild* *erred*. Managing Editor



## Lofty responses

The idea of climbing the highest peak in each State and Territory ('A Lofty Challenge', *Wild* no 87) has certainly been around for many years. I would not be surprised to hear that this feat has been achieved by many. At least one of our diverse coalition of experienced South Australian walkers achieved the feat within a six-month period in 1988 as part of a Bicentennial project...based on this and prior experience, I suggest that it would be feasible to climb all peaks within the one calendar month...

Our approach to each of the peaks was similar to that used by your authors. However, we had to abort our approach to Mt Woodroffe at that time because we had been unable to obtain permission for this access...

One of the highlights for me of the 1988 climbs was the one which differed from those described by your authors. We climbed through fresh snow from Dead Horse Gap and descended the following day to Geehi by Hannells Spur. We had been joined by about 20 others to see the sunrise from the top of Australia on Australia Day in the Bicentennial year!

R Arthur Ward  
Hawthorndene, SA

Like many others, my late partner Liz Burch and I set ourselves similar objectives to Nick and Ben Gough. We also took on the challenge of getting to and getting up the eight highest peaks in all Australian States and mainland Territories. We managed all but Western Australia and the Northern Territory, leaving me with unfinished business.



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We were even able to climb Mt Woodroffe back in 1995, deep in Aboriginal territory. Like Nick and Ben, we were also with a party from Desert Tracks and also met local Aboriginal custodian Peter Nyangu. Your article was not totally accurate in quoting Peter as doubting that any 'white fellas' had climbed the mountain in the past 20 years. Peter's memory of seven years back must have faded a bit as about a dozen of us made it to the top in 1995.

I'd like to hear from folk planning a climb of Mt Zeil in 2003 because access is a problem, as your article stated. I would like to be a part of the next attempt...

Bob James  
Townsville, QLD

Nick and Ben Gough ask whether anyone else has bagged the highest peak in each State and Territory. On a trip around the highest peaks in 1999 I noticed that a couple of the preceding journal entries at the top of Mt Zeil for that year were written by groups who bagged the whole set in one trip. I'm pretty sure that the complete set has been bagged by bicycle riders too—in fact I think I've read about that in *Wild*, but it may have been somewhere else.

Andy Simpson  
Lane Cove, NSW

## Snow-caves

The article on the death of the snowboarders (*Wild* no 87) was very interesting. However, there are two very important details that were not mentioned.

The first is that carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in high concentrations is rapidly fatal. (There is a long history of people going down old wells and collapsing, and their friend going down to help and also dying due to the high concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>.) The second is that CO<sub>2</sub> is a heavy gas (hence its high concentration at the bottom of the well).

It is probably more important to have the entrance of the snow-cave open and lower than the floor of the cave, allowing the CO<sub>2</sub> to exit and be replaced by the lighter air mix, than it is to worry about a hole in the roof. Although, if there are both an exit and a hole, the CO<sub>2</sub> will escape through the low exit and be replaced by fresh air from above (rather than the fresh air having to come in by the exit). In the presence of a blocked, low exit, a hole the size of only several centimetres in diameter will be pretty useless except to someone very close to it.

It would seem that in the presence of high CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations, anyone attempting to dig out through a blocked, low exit might rapidly die, and it would be safer to try to dig through the upper part of the cave...

Dr Ian Reid  
Woy Woy, NSW

...snow is porous to an extent; the problem is that breath condenses and freezes on the interior (of snow-caves) and effectively 'air tight' the surface. Ventilation is absolutely essential, and a hole straight up or to the lee side works best as an 'extractor'. An in-

coming source is also necessary and thus we were never allowed to block the entrance with a rucksack. For those of us who consider camping above the snowline I would suggest adding a length of acrylic pipe to the survival kit (a length about 1.5 metres should suffice but stay out of potential wind-drift sites; it is only too easy to be buried)...

Barry Turner  
Blairgowrie, Vic

## Lessons from nature

In 1972 I walked into Lake Pedder just a few months before the rising dam waters flooded one of Australia's most beautiful places. The experience motivated me to contribute in many ways to the voluntary conservation movement for the next 30 years. But I had to earn a living and I chose to work in the mining industry. I've never regretted that decision because the wealth created by 200 years of mining just 0.1 per cent of the Australian land surface has given us the economic ability to protect so much of what remained once our environmental conscience was awakened in the 1970s.

So it was with some irony that I read the article in Green Pages (*Wild* no 86) about the campaign to drain Lake Pedder and restore its environment. Of all the States, Tasmania is probably the one most opposed to mining and economic development, yet it will be the techniques of mine-site rehabilitation developed by the mining industry that will be used to help restore Lake Pedder, should it ever be drained...

Tasmania's current dependence on tourism and agriculture as its two major industries has created a State with high unemployment and many other social problems, in spite of very generous funding from the Federal Government. This narrow focus of the State's economy is contrary to the lessons learned from nature: that diversity provides strength and resilience.

If the electricity from Lake Pedder is no longer needed, by all means drain the lake. But the need to go well beyond the continual Green opposition to virtually all economic development in Tasmania is one of the messages to the future that should have been placed in the Lake Pedder time capsule. Just as your readers are enjoying the products of mining in your magazine (pigments and colours on your pages, printing machinery made from metals, electricity from the burning of coal to run these machines), so it's time for Tasmania to wake up and reinvent its future, with mining and a restored Lake Pedder we hope to be included as part of that brighter future.

Bernie Masters  
(by email)

## Clever country?

I came to Australia from Europe a year ago and settled in East Gippsland for many reasons. The environment and the people are two of those reasons.

I love to see and be in the natural environment and often take weekend drives,

and go bushwalking and canoeing to enjoy this area and get to know it.

I have been hearing about the arguments to do with logging and tried to form a balanced opinion, not knowing enough and being a newcomer.

Recently I drove along the Yalmy road to see the Snowy River National Park. The book I have said it went through a spectacular forest. Well, it was. Was a forest I mean. I was shocked to see the two signs that said 'Snowy River National Park' and 'Welcome to the Snowy River Wilderness', then a huge, cut-down area of this beautiful old-growth forest not far on (it is right at the junction with the Rodger River Track) and, as far as I could judge from the position of the two signs, within the boundaries of the park. When I made enquiries I was told that it was...allowed.

Even so, I still wonder how something like that can be allowed to happen in such proximity to a National Park. That sight has so upset me that I don't ever want to go back. I wonder whether tourists who come from further away feel the same. I don't know enough about the logging issue to be too vocal about it. All I know is that this seems like a crime. It is something that we Europeans would have done centuries ago. We have almost no original forests left, only what bits we allowed to grow back as we wanted them to. Australia should know better.

Why can't this 'clever country' learn that its original environment is its greatest asset and other countries would pay millions to have back what they destroyed?

Cinzia Mariolini  
Bairnsdale, Vic

## Get an education

*Wild* Gear Surveys are perfect the way they are; don't worry about telling people what to buy—those people should get an education. Above all, maintain your independence.

Craig Garrioch  
Heidelberg, Vic

Firstly, I love *Wild*. It's a great magazine. Keep up the good work.

Secondly, don't change the Gear Surveys...  
Noam Olshina  
(by email)

## No Quentin!

I yet again looked forward to receiving the latest issue of *Wild* in the post and, as I usually do, immediately turned the pages to read 'The Wild Life' according to Quentin Chester. My enthusiasm for starting the magazine off with Quentin comes from enjoying the humour and wit with which he describes the experiences of life in the bush. Being able to view the world from the funny side of life is a treasured attribute in this current climate of doom and gloom.

So it was with great disappointment that I turned the pages of *Wild* no 86 to find no Quentin! I hope his absence means that he



# Platypus water bottles



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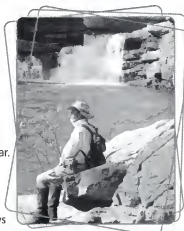
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is just taking a well-earned break enjoying the bush somewhere and not a permanent change to the magazine.

Heather Morrison  
Emerald, Vic

### Fraud squad

Photographers, you should all be ashamed of yourselves for misrepresenting nature! In future, please contact Mr O'Hara (Wildfire, Wild no 87) with a brief description of how you propose to use your equipment/take your shot so as not to disappoint him! I suspect Angus Munro (Folio, Wild no 87) will now expect a call from the Hobart fraud squad for having us believe Mt Wellington floats on a hazy sea! Shame, Angus, shame!

Chris Bibby  
(by email)

### Buzzer

What do I have to do to take up the challenge offered by Angela Wild (Wildfire, Wild no 87) to attempt Federation Peak in January 2004? My husband and I and a couple of friends, ranging in age from 43 to 56, started bushwalking about five years ago and have dreamed of Federation Peak and Tasmania since walking the Overland Track and spending time travelling around the State in March 2000. We have declared that we will go back to Tassie and at least walk to Federation Peak, if not climb it. The couple of articles from previous issues of *Wild*, that Angela mentioned reading, have certainly also fuelled our imagination...

...thanks for the great magazine. It's a real buzz to find it in my letter-box. No one gets much sense from me until I've had my fill of *Wild* on that particular mail day.

Dawn Keirle  
Cobar, NSW

### Profit insurance

It seems at least some of your readership has swallowed the insurance industry's propaganda about public liability claims. Courts, lawyers and injured people are blamed for the sudden rise in premiums. The reality is that the profit margins of the insurance industry have been slashed by a fall in investment returns, the failure of HIH, and massive disasters overseas. Premiums have been dramatically increased in order to prop up those sagging profit margins and to readjust premium levels in general insurance across the board because they were kept unrealistically low by HIH for many years.

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Marko Cvjetanovic  
(by email)

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic, 3181 or email [wild@wild.com.au](mailto:wild@wild.com.au)

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## The Alps ablaze!

A series of massive, uncontrolled bushfires—unrivalled in extent since the infamous 1939 bushfires—have destroyed more than a million hectares of native forest in the Australian Alps. Extending from just east of the north-eastern Victorian city of Wangaratta, through southern New South Wales to the suburbs of Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory—where some 500 houses were destroyed and four people died—the disastrous fires burnt, almost unchecked, for most of January. There were also serious bushfires in southern and north-eastern Tasmania and near Perth in Western Australia.

Possibly triggered by some of the driest conditions on record following prolonged drought, there were major fires on Mt Buffalo, Mt Feathertop and Mt Hotham, Mt Bogong, Mt Pinnibar, and the Snowy Mountains. As these fires continued to burn unchecked they joined to form a single, massive blaze over a front of hundreds of kilometres. Numerous towns and ski resorts from Bright in Victoria to Thredbo in NSW were seriously threatened and were fully—or partly—evacuated. On some days a pall of smoke obliterated the sky over western Victoria, hundreds of kilometres away.

In late January authorities used newspaper advertisements to 'advise' the public not to enter large tracts of National Park including in the Mt Buffalo and Alpine National Parks. Many historical huts and other structures were razed including the Mt Franklin Chalet, the oldest ski lodge on the Australian mainland, in the Namadgi National Park, ACT. As we went to press it was thought that some ten huts had been lost in the Kosciuszko National Park—two thirds of which was burnt—including Cesjacks, Derschkos and Pretty Plain. In Victoria at least three popular huts are believed to have been destroyed: Demick, Dibbins and Spargos.

Not surprisingly, the fires also reignited the debate about forest management including the use of controlled burns. An article in the Melbourne Age on 24 January quoted timber 'industry figures' claiming that recently announced (and minuscule) Victorian Government logging cuts would result in a dangerous loss of bushfire-fighting machinery and expertise. One was quoted as saying: "Loggers know the bush. They know how to cut roads into it and they know how to work it. They're real good people in a fire."

## Kangaroo Hoppet 2002



*Above, men's winners, Kangaroo Hoppet 2002, Anthony Evans (left, third), Victorian Minister for Tourism John Pandazopoulos, Stanislav Rezac (first), and Cameron Morton (with daughter Lucy). Right, women's winners, Sarah Peters (left, second), Belinda Phillips (first), and Camille Melvey. Stephen Curtain*



Luxemburg and Lebanon were new among a total of 24 nations, including Australia, to have entries in the latest edition of this 42-kilometre event held on 31 August at Falls Creek, Victoria. After an excellent ski season, with the Falls Creek cross-country trails being groomed since early July, the weather warmed up in the three days leading up to the race. This year's winning time of 2 hours, 10 minutes and 40 seconds from the Czech Republic's Stanislav Rezac for the men's division of the Kangaroo

Hoppet was well down on last year's winning time of 1:52:43. Australians Cameron Morton and Anthony Evans clocked times of 2:15:43 and 2:18:48 for second and third places, respectively. In the women's division, Australians also fared well, with first and third places being scooped by Belinda Phillips (2:30:53) and Camille Melvey (2:41:12), respectively. Canadian Sarah Peters placed second in a time of 2:40:14.

*Stephen Curtain*

## Rogaining—search but no rescue

In 2002 rogaining celebrated its 25th anniversary. During the past 25 years rogaining has enjoyed an excellent safety record with many thousands of incident-free rogaine days recorded. However, in June 2002 at the popular Paddy Pallin six-hour rogaine, held in the very rugged sandstone country at Newnes in the Wollomai National Park, NSW, that record was tested. One hour after the 3 pm finish time only 598 of the 600 competitors had returned. The missing pair were identified—a father and adult daughter novice team; on the dashboard of their empty car was

a pristine copy of *Rogaining—Cross Country Navigation*. Their route intention sheet lodged with the organisers indicated their first few control points to be visited but not beyond. However, on their intended route the team had not registered at a manned pass leading up to the sandstone plateau 400 metres above the starting point. Had they slipped through undetected?

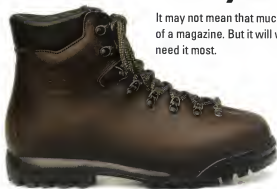
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the appropriate sector of the course. Radio checks every hour maintained communication. It was cold but conditions could have been much worse. There was no mobile phone coverage and at 10 pm the decision was made for a group to drive to a phone and contact the family (to tell them what happened, find out what bushwalking experience the team had and to gather details of their clothing and other gear), and inform the police. For the first time in the history of rogaining, organisers had to enlist external assistance, and at 10.30 pm the Lithgow police were called from a remote house.

At dawn police and State Emergency Service personnel arrived, another two search

teams of rogainers also left to search different gullies and later after the mist had lifted the police helicopter came and began a grid search pattern. At 11.30 am word came that the missing team had walked into a farm near Glen Davies, well but tired and hungry and also well off the rogaine map. The explanation: an unfamiliar compass had led to the north arrow being mistaken for the south!

Julian Ledger, NSW Rogaining Association

## SCROGGIN

✦ The Australian documentary **The Second Step** (recently screened on ABC TV),

*Team AAARG II on its way to winning the TK1 Men's Open Relay division of the 2002 Murray Marathon in a total time of 29 hours, 59 minutes and 25 seconds. Mark Banham*



## Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Managing Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email wild@wild.com.au

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Activities: **R** rogaining

filmed and directed by Gary Caganoff, has received two major awards at important international film festivals. The film about above-the-knee double-leg amputee **Warren Macdonald's** epic journey to Federation Peak in South-west Tasmania, won the Jury's Grand Prize (Best Film) at the 27th Banff Mountain Film Festival, in Canada, and Best Mountaineering Film at the Kendal Mountain Film Festival, in the UK. Both festivals were held in November.

✦ Victoria's Mansfield Apex Club has purchased three **EPIRBs** which are available, at no charge, from the **Mansfield Police Station** for use in remote areas in case of emergency. ☺

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au



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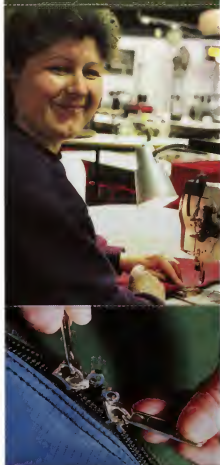
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# Across the Arthurs

The Western and Eastern Arthurs from end to end, by Rob Mueller

IT ALL STARTS SIMPLY ENOUGH. ANDREW and I are reminiscing about our epic Federation Peak walk six years ago. I suggest that we walk the Western Arthurs some time. We look at the map and see that sharp ridge-line, falling off into glacial lakes like Oberon and Cygnus, named after the planets, constellations and stars. As usual his answer is: 'Yeah, sounds like a great idea.' Often that's about as far as it gets.

We mention the idea to Barnaby who mentions it to Tessa, the girl with whom he'd travelled through South America, as well as to Kate, his current housemate, and then to some girl Lucy whom he'd met at a conservation meeting. Suddenly it isn't just a passing idea. It's turning into a real trip with six confirmed walkers, all yearning for two weeks of extreme wilderness to save their minds from tedious desk jobs.

The usual machinations take their course; maps and equipment are bought, begged and borrowed, flights booked, food hurriedly

organised. We divide all our meals into individual units and our mathematicians calculate our allotment of seven Vita-wheats a day. Somehow our sole vegetarian is sent on a mission to buy lunch salami for the group. She returns with a whole 1.2 kilogram log of salami, which she refuses to have any part in carrying. We end up with about one cubic inch of salami a day, each—not a lot when paired with seven Vita-wheats.

It's been some time since any of us have done a serious walk but it doesn't take long to get back into the zone. Passing through some low forest and into the open, the setting sun casts a golden light across the Arthur Plains and views of the Western Arthur Range fill us with expectation. The cameras start to click, preparing for what was later to be an excessive array of slightly different views of the same grass plains with rugged mountains in the background. Twilight guides us to our first camp-site at Junction Creek. The usual first-night camp fash-

ion parade of newly acquired gear draws appropriate looks of envy from each other.

Dappled sun through the trees wakes us and subsequently the first calls of nature as well. Each person tramps off, paper under arm, towards the toilet and returns with a curious 'I'm not sure I reeeally just saw that' look. There are jokes about abduction by aliens. Finally it is my turn; I walk with trepidation up the narrow path. A Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife sign greets me, describing efforts to reduce damage with the installation of 'fly in, fly out' toilets. I see what spooked them all: a large, green, disc-shaped container with a screw-top lid, temporarily anchored to the ground. We joke about visions of helicopters flying them out and accidentally losing them over some town—the most horrific 'unidentified flying object' imaginable.

A flat track across button-grass plains takes us straight to the base of Moraine A. We brace ourselves for what looks like an





endless and increasingly steep climb. We rest on some rocks halfway up and before we know it we're on the ridgetop. We eat lunch and fill our lungs with the cool, fresh air. The ridge of sharp peaks we'll be walking the next week is to the south-east, eventually falling away to green plains and Lake Fortuna. The warm afternoon sun guides us over the gentle saddles and we descend to Lake Cygnus, take off our boots and enjoy dipping our feet in the water. Eventually the mountains swallow the sinking sun and its warmth, forcing us to cook dinner quickly and retire.

The sun is barely up and already we can feel sweat forming. The gentle saddles of the day before have disappeared and the track is steeper and rockier. A languishing lunch at Square Lake refuels us before the long climb to the saddle next to Mt Orion. Just as we're ready to take a break, Lake Oberon

appears. Pandanni plants litter the green slopes and grey crags, before the drop to the dark-blue water below. Everyone scrambles for their cameras, determined to take the definitive photo. We climb down to the lake and

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*'Narrow ledges, dodgy clumps  
of vegetation and scree slopes  
all with considerable exposure...'*

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set up camp. In one of those peaceful moments we sit contemplatively by the stream, collecting water from a trickle. Around us there is only the gentle, distant sound of the breeze through the trees.

The track notes tell us that we're now entering the hardest section of the walk;

from Lake Oberon it's a climb over rocks and slabs and through narrow, keyhole gaps. Disaster strikes when a bottle of sprouts Kate has been growing is knocked off her pack, spraying half-grown sprouts over the rocks below. Luckily we manage to find most of them. Unfortunately, the track does not let up. Steeper and steeper sections ensue. We reach the next camp-site at High Moor thoroughly tired and sore. We pitch our tents, grimacing as a group coming from the other direction tells us that the next section is just as hard.

The morning brings our first bad omen. Clouds have come in and the wind has picked up. As we start to walk, the first drops of rain begin to hit our faces and continue on and off during the day. A complex route winds through the Beggary Bumps. In places the track is nearly vertical—steps have been cut into the peat by thou-



*High Moor gives outstanding views  
of Federation Peak, middle, and  
Precipitous Bluff, right. Chris Baxter*



sands of feet before us. Every now and then we come to a completely collapsed section of track and lower ourselves on exposed roots.

While many sections of the walk have sweeping views of untouched lakes and ragged peaks, sometimes walking can just feel like trudging, step after step. If it's raining, you feel like a horse with blinkers. When it's not too steep, your mind wanders; people start to talk about all sorts of weird ideas. We considered inventing a person. Like the tales of the Yeti or the abominable snowman, we decided to create a mythical figure, a lone hiker in the mountains whom no one had ever seen. He'd be

gully. The track opens a bit more and, after a long and strenuous day, we find ourselves at Haven Lake. Despite the name, the wind howls, sending ripple patterns swirling across the lake's surface. We feel a small sense of relief knowing that the hardest part of the walk is now behind us.

All night the wind blows a gale and there's no respite in the morning. The sun darts in and out of the clouds before disappearing completely. However, being able to walk rather than scramble makes a welcome change. By 3 pm we are at Promontory Lake but the rain has begun to set in as only Tasmanian rain can. 'Let's camp here and wait it out', I pipe up. Nobody disagrees.

you can hear what's going on nearby, like two ships passing through a fog. 'What should we have for dinner?' I call out to the other tent. 'I'm thinking the rice sounds good.'

'Not the rice, let's have pasta.'

'Rice.'

'Pasta.'

'RICE.' I have to get out of here for a while. I put on a lot of clothes and unzip the tent. I step out and notice that we have

## 'By the time we reach Béchervaise Plateau, we are still seriously spooked'

the Göran Kropp of the Tasmanian wilderness. For those who don't know, Göran Kropp was a Swede who cycled from Sweden to Nepal in 1995 carrying over 100 kilograms of supplies and equipment, climbed Mt Everest without bottled oxygen and, just to prove a point, cycled back home again.

We reach the ominously named Tilted Chasm, an eroded scree slope, and Lovers Leap, a short-cut four metre drop to a long

When you get into camp early and it starts to rain, there generally isn't a lot to do. Your main choices are reading your book (if you have one) or playing cards (if you have them). The only other option is food talk. What's left to eat, who has the blocks of chocolate, who ate all the Smarties and cashews from the scroggin bag and, finally, what's for dinner. Being in a tent feels very disembodied; you can't see anything, but





a companion. He's arrived quietly and is quickly setting up. He comes from Perth and his name is Tristan. I discover that in five-six hours (in one day) he has walked what took us 14 hours (split between two days). From High Moor to Promontory Lake in less than six hours. Impossible—I think to myself. I wander back to relay this information to the others.

'Impossible', they all say but I can hear the doubt in their voices. We start to cook

The next day brings more of the same wind and rain, only now it is colder wind and wetter rain. Our initial plan was to walk only the Western Arthurs but our good progress leads us to believe that we may be able to complete a traverse including an ascent of Federation Peak. Thus, despite my whiny protesting, we pack up camp and head off to across Centaurus Ridge in the wake of Tristan.

Things hit a low at lunch; we huddle in a small cave in a complete white-out. Every-

and Federation Peak. By this point, we have decided that the full trip is on. We gather strength at the base of Luckmans Lead. Yet again, we overestimate the climb. Before we know it, we have reached the area just below the summit. An hour or so later, we arrive at the boarded camp site at Stuart Saddle and meet our welcoming committee (Tristan) who has kindly convinced some other recent arrivals to move on to Goon Moor.



*Approached from Moraine A, the Western Arthurs start off benignly enough... Near Mt Hesperus. Baxter*

dinner and our mystery man comes over to join us. By the end of the evening, we have a new friend, walking companion and storyteller. He had camped at High Moor the night before but hadn't got any sleep. The wind had been so strong that it had snapped one of the guy wires on his tent. His mission is to make it to Federation Peak so that he can climb it on his birthday, in four days' time. No easy feat but he has a secret weapon—trekking poles. We're sceptical but by the end of the evening he has convinced us that the extra stability and leverage allows you to walk significantly faster.

one is wearing all their clothes but it isn't enough to stop the shivering. We walk on, failing to see anything of the craggy formations we were crossing. Suddenly, the cloud lifts a bit and in scattered beams of sun the crags are exposed, along with our seemingly lost smiles. We take our first photos in days and march off the Western Arthurs with a burst of energy. By the time we reach Lake Rosanne, Tristan is already set up and waiting.

The next day, we reach the track junction and have to decide whether to return to the Scotts Peak Dam car park across the Arthur Plains or to continue to the Eastern Arthurs

The route from Goon Moor to Thwaites Plateau is comprised of steep, rocky sections and it is surrounded by unbelievably sharp and it is surrounded by unbelievably sharp and scratchy scoparia bushes. Gaiters give little protection. By 2 pm we are at Thwaites Plateau. With clouds beginning to move in, we decide that today is probably our best chance at Federation Peak. We scoff a late lunch, pack some essentials and head to the direct ascent route. As we arrive at its base, who should come virtually bounding down from the summit to greet us but our intrepid Western Australian. Without a moment's hesitation he decides he'd like to go



# The Other Side of the Arthurs

We're loving them to death, by *Chris Baxter*

Humankind's disastrous destruction of the natural environment is already documented. The deforestation of Europe, the 'toxicification' of the former USSR, and the wholesale clear-felling of Amazon rainforest are but a fraction of a depressing list. But it comes as a shock to realise that wilderness-loving Australian bushwalkers of the 21st century are contributing to the demise of one of the world's most beautiful mountain regions.

Last year I fulfilled a long-held ambition to traverse the Western Arthurs. I had not been

other equipment. To try to prevent this from occurring, brushes are provided for walkers to scrub their belongings upon entering and leaving the region.

The dank, muddy camp-sites at Junction Creek, long since denuded of all underfoot vegetation, are a further shocking reality.

A sidetrack pointing to the toilet leads to a one-and-a-half metre tall, flat-topped, metallic-looking ball unlike the expected or familiar little building. It looks like one of the mines used to blow up shipping in the Second World

the horizon forming a visual blight on the landscape. Once on top of the range things are no better. A muddy rut shows the way, with steps kicked into the steepest slopes accompanied by shrubs broken by the scrambling hands seeking additional support. These eroded eyesores are worsened by off-shoots around camp-sites.

The work that Parks Tasmania is doing to reduce the problem on the range is remarkable. A variety of methods are used to reduce human impact. Local rocks are generally used for track protection, placed to lessen the erosion caused by passing feet. Suspended duckboards are used at present only in one extreme situation near Lake Oberon. In other cases, tracks have been completely rerouted to reduce exposure and allow regeneration. At key points markers are used to confine traffic to a single, hardened path. In other areas, arrows indicate that walkers should spread out to avoid creating a track on the herb fields found on much of this beautiful but fragile range.

Other Parks Tasmania management initiatives include considerable walker education, the ban on camp-fires in the region, the provision of tent platforms at most camp-sites, the closure of areas for regeneration and other reasons, and extensive research. This research has resulted in little encouragement. The gist of it is that the terrain is so fragile that it is impossible for humans to visit without leaving their mark—literally. And we're not talking big numbers. Tests show that as few as 200 passes by walkers can break through the delicate vegetation cover on a flat alpine herb field, leading to the development of quagmires. Tests at all such sites show that there is measurable damage after only 30 passes a year. There is spectacular damage for all to see and it is the product of some 200 walkers a year for less than 25 years.

What can be done? It is essential that visitor numbers be reduced soon—and significantly. The Arthurs are a serious place and not for the inexperienced. With their natural hazards of inescapability, foul weather, scrub, sometimes difficult navigation and precipitous scrambling with a heavy pack, many walkers may wish to consider alternative destinations. But more is required. Parks Tasmania's proposed permit system, stymied by lobby groups a few years ago, is inevitable. I'd also propose substantial permit fees to act as a deterrent and to help to pay for some of the protective measures outlined in this article. While it's early days for trekking poles in Australia, they appear to be damaging delicate surfaces like those found in much of the Arthurs, and their use might have to be banned in certain regions. And, as always, walker education must play a major role, so that we can change our behaviour to ensure the long-term interests of a landscape we profess to love. ●

*Chris Baxter* has been visiting high places since his pre-teen days. This activity has taken him to many parts of south-eastern Australia and overseas. He visits such places at every opportunity—when he is not busy publishing *Wild*.



*'The jewel in the crown' of the Western Arthurs, Lake Oberon. Nick Tapp*

in the region since a series of trips to the Eastern Arthurs in the 1960s and 1970s, and had never visited this range.

The roads and other earthworks associated with the flooded Lake Pedder are an eyesore clearly visible from many high points in South-west Tasmania including from much of the Western Arthurs. But after leaving your vantage point you are confronted with damage of another origin—the unpleasant reality of bushwalker impact on this fragile region of high rainfall. Stepping off the short section of duckboards, you immediately plunge into a deep, muddy trench that continues for many kilometres across the region's extensive button-grass plains.

Junction Creek, a popular camp-site, brings a further shock. A sign at the creek crossing advises of the risk to many of the area's plant species from the presence of cinnamon fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*). This disease is spread by soil carried on walkers' boots and

War, except for a sign that advises you to squat on top and secure the lid when you've finished. Each year Parks Tasmania helicopters these toilets from the region for emptying. As this costs thousands of dollars, the sign also requests that users help to reduce the frequency of such flights by not urinating in the toilets.

This is one of the best examples of the extraordinary work Parks Tasmania does to protect the area from further damage. In a region where rocky, root-infested ground makes the effective burying of human waste extremely difficult (almost impossible without a trowel) the provision of these facilities at many camp-sites, particularly in the Western Arthurs, is almost essential. (Apart from aesthetic considerations, the pollution of drinking-water, and resultant illnesses, would otherwise be a real possibility.)

As you climb Moraine A on to the Western Arthurs the eroded tracks snake their way to



back up again. We have only one confident rockclimber in our group, so having another to go ahead and guide is a godsend, making the entire climb straightforward despite the extreme exposure. We sit on top and enjoy a view of the country we have come across, then return to the plateau for the night. And not a moment too soon—the rain begins to pound down as we finish dinner.

make an extremely uncomfortable leap, leaving me white and shaking and everybody else nervous. We pass packs and steady ourselves. Fortunately, a final gully climb leads us out of the traverse and on to open ground.

By the time we reach Béchervaise Plateau, we are still seriously spooked and decide we have had enough. The rain is still beat-

great but at the moment the thought of reaching the end is even greater. After the apparently endless five kilometres we reach the bridge that crosses Farmhouse Creek.

Everyone is happy and slightly relieved to have made it. We take an obligatory 'after' photo, and set up camp near the road. We're out of the South-west World Heritage Area and next to the road is a square kilometre



Wild Managing Editor Chris Baxter between Mt Capricorn and High Moor, Western Arthur Range. Tapp

From here it should all be fairly simple. We have to skirt the southern side of Federation Peak, and then descend Moss Ridge. We haven't organised any transport at the end, so we ask some people whose car is waiting for them at the end of the walk to phone a bus company in Geeveston to tell them there'd be seven hikers at Farmhouse Creek in three days' time.

How likely is that to work? No matter, first we have to get there. Our initial surprise comes as we pass the ascent route to the summit. We joke about Tristan's desire to climb Federation peak on his birthday—only a madman would attempt it in this weather. A few moments later Tristan appears. It was his birthday wish and was fog and pouring rain to deny him? Beyond the summit turn-off, the Southern Traverse brings even scarier moments. Narrow ledges, dodgy clumps of vegetation and scree slopes all with considerable exposure are tricky at the best of times; add rivers of freezing water flowing down the rocks and you've got the picture. A rock edge and failing grip forces me to

ing down. Luckily there are raised, wooden platforms to camp on because it rains hard for the rest of the afternoon and night.

By the next morning we are literally on an island in a lake 15 centimetres deep. In typical style Tristan decides he has had enough. Hell or high water, he is going to make it out today. We struggle on at our own pace, encountering steep peat slopes before entering the jungle gym they call Moss Ridge. Roots threaten to trip you from below while fallen trees push you down from above. A sprain, slip or bump seems inevitable but somehow we all avoid mishap. Eventually we are on the plains again, discovering the synonymous nature of 'track' and 'creek' in Tasmania. We camp for the night among large trees, anticipating our final day of walking tomorrow.

We are now on the final stretch. The plains open up and then close among the trees again. Eventually we reach Farmhouse Creek and our map tells us that we've only got about five kilometres to go. Our pace picks up; two weeks of walking have been

of bush that has been slashed and burned. How different from where we've just been. The next day a bus comes for us—Tristan's doing. Yep—he'd made it from Béchervaise Plateau to Farmhouse Creek in one day. After a brief pause to scrawl us a note, he began the 20 kilometre walk along the road towards Geeveston.

Look out, Göran. 

## Rob Mueller

took up bushwalking while at university, and hasn't managed to shake the habit since. He regularly enjoys walking in Victoria and, when he can, the wilderness of Tasmania.





# Neophytes to Bogong

**Glenn van der Knijff recalls his first overnight bushwalk almost 25 years ago with a bunch of greenhorn mates**

IT MUST HAVE BEEN 1977. I REMEMBER cramming into the back seat of a car belonging to our Cub/Scout leader, Mr Rayner, singing along to Yesterday's News (Fleetwood Mac). Macca, one of the more experienced Scouts, was probably their biggest fan but we all liked them.

We rounded a tight curve in the road and crossed over Tawonga Gap. Peering down at Mt Beauty township below I gradually turned my gaze upwards. Up, up, and up until, with my neck arched, I stared in awe at the top of Mt Bogong. To me, then, it was the highest mountain in the world. Someone pointed out the Staircase Spur. My eyes carefully followed a line drawn by the finger; it looked a long way from the base of the mountain to the summit, but back then everything was a new experience for a ten-year-old boy. With nervous anticipation at standing atop 'Bogong' I was eager to depart.

Our troop headed off along the Mountain Creek Track, our leaders—Mr Rayner, Marion and Jim—showing the way. We must have crossed half a dozen creeks (I now know that most crossings are of the same creek). After the final crossing the track rose gently. Here we all paused, dumped our packs and formed a large circle. I was still a Cub, as were a few of the other boys, and we had to become Scouts before we were permitted to undertake this camp; my first overnight bushwalk. After a few 'dib dib dibs' and 'dob dob dobs' we were initiated in the Bright Scout Troop.

Shouldering our rucksacks, we continued our assault on Mt Bogong. We carried few luxuries in our packs; I had a heavy, cotton sleeping-bag, a blanket, some spare clothes, hat and gloves, bowl and cutlery, and some sandwiches. We did not have mattresses of any kind and I suppose most of the communal food was carried by the leaders.

The walking track up the Staircase Spur branched from the Mountain Creek Track and ascended more steeply than any track I'd climbed before. I have vivid memories of severe pain and breathlessness brought on by straining legs and strained lungs. As we entered the tall forest of alpine ash one section of track in particular was extremely steep and tough. It seemed to drag on for ever and as I was unable to keep up with the fitter front runners (who included Macca, Dasha and Abdel), I dropped back to the middle of the field. Had it been a horse-race I would have been scratched shortly after the start! The entire Scout troop was now spread out over a great distance. The Scout leaders were far behind and nowhere to be seen and we were certainly proud of ourselves for beating them. (Of course, they



*Summit glory, 2 April 1977! The author is the boy on the right.*

were probably carrying twice as much weight as we but we did not care.)

Fortunately, the track levelled off and I was able to regain my breath. There was also a distinct change in the forest here; the tall forest had been replaced with shorter snow gums somewhere near the top of the steep pinch. I hadn't noticed because I had been struggling, head down, with the effects of gravity.

The flatter section of track seemed to last for a while, mainly because of the head-high

*The author's Scout group being 'initiated' below Mt Bogong before its mass assault on Victoria's highest peak. All uncredited photos by Marion Wiggins*

scrub that slowed our progress. At least we now had a few enticing views of the summit. Unexpectedly, I burst out of the scrub and into a small clearing. A tiny structure, Bivouac Hut, nestled on the far side. I rested here and inspected the hut.





The ramshackle structure was built from timber and corrugated iron, and its basic facilities included a fireplace at one end and a few bunks at the other. A few other boys arrived so we continued on our way.

Immediately the track began to climb and I began to feel 'stuffed' although this was amply compensated for by the views which began to open up around us. I began to experience the exhilarating feeling of ad-

Gap but, oddly enough, none of them were carrying rucksacks. Waving their arms vigorously, they appeared to be waiting for us to return. Not knowing where our leaders had planned for us to camp, we reluctantly walked down to join them. Here we were informed that our Scout troop would be camping back down at Bivouac Hut. I cursed myself for having walked so far ahead of the Scout leaders and carrying my rucksack all that

ing how the recollections of a ten-year-old can blur over the years.)

The first boys to make it back to Bivouac Hut grabbed the bunks so most of us had no choice but to camp outside on the dirt and grass. We obeyed the Scout law and all pitched in with preparing dinner, cooking and washing the dishes. As the evening grew darker we found ourselves partaking in the most hackneyed Scout tradition; spinning yarns by the camp-fire. Stories of drop bears, Tassy tigers and bush pigs had us enthralled for ages. The fire slowly began to fade—and so did the quality of the stories. Quietly, many of the boys drifted away from the fire and off to bed.

Some of us, however, did not sleep well that night. Maybe it was because we had no sleeping-mats. Maybe it was because our sleeping-bags were inadequate for the cold. Or maybe it was because we stayed up half the night inside the hut, trying to build the biggest fire that we could!

The snapping of twigs and unzipping of sleeping-bags were indications of get-up time in the morning. We soon had a crackling fire and it was here, at breakfast time, that I developed a love for sweetened, condensed milk and Milo. The day was warm and sunny but none of us felt like climbing back up to the top; the mock bets we had placed on a race down the track to the car park were more appealing.

We brushed hastily through the growth of thick, head-high scrub before the race began. It was soon apparent to me that I was not going to win, but I believed Abdel was a hot chance. Macca and Abdel were among the first down but conflicting descriptions of the final dash meant that I never found out who won. At least I finished with the other front runners.

I recall this first bushwalk with some sentimentality. Much of what I remember has changed. Only months later both Bivouac and Summit Huts were destroyed by an unknown arsonist, and a new refuge hut has since been built not far from the old Bivouac Hut. I'm now a regular visitor to Mt Bogong and although I have a strong sense of familiarity with the mountain, there is always a feeling of excitement and anticipation awaiting every ascent. You, too, will be captured by the alluring spell that Bogong casts on its visitors!



*Darren ('Dasha') Kelly, outside the original Bivouac Hut (since replaced by the present hut).*

venture and discovery that only comes from your first visit to a new area—such as Bogong.

Late in the afternoon we climbed above the limit of tree growth and rounded the sides of a couple of small hills. Ahead of us was a small saddle named Gorge Gap and straining my eyes up the slope I could make out the three front runners—Macca and company—resting not too far below the top. I began to climb towards them and was immediately overcome by a strange sense of insecurity. Dark clouds hung overhead, a cold wind blew across the craggy slope, and an eerie sound emanated from the strange metal poles which adorned the upper slope of the mountain at even intervals. I was later informed that these were snow-poles designed to aid navigation in snow conditions. When I finally joined the others I was still coming to terms with the idea that people would want to come here in winter.

The boys had been resting at one of the snow-poles that had been constructed as part of a monument for three skiers who had died on the mountain in a blizzard in 1943. Not far away a dilapidated hut, clad in weather-beaten panels of corrugated iron, clung precariously to the side of the mountain. The Summit Hut offered little shelter and looked as though it would collapse any minute.

Looking back down the track I could see that the rest of the party had reached Gorge



*The author returned to Mt Bogong with his sister Carolyn the year after his visit with the Scouts. Note the Summit Hut (since destroyed) in the background. van der Knijff collection*

extra distance. Even more disappointing was the realisation that I would probably not reach the top on this trip but I consoled myself with the fact that I'd climbed higher than most of the other boys. (Late in 2002, when I contacted one of the leaders—Marion Wiggins—seeking photos, she recalled that some of the boys had, in fact, reached the summit. A check of the photos confirmed this. We worked out that those of us who reached the Summit Hut had actually made a dash for the summit cairn before heading down to Bivouac Hut for the night. It's amaz-



**Glenn van der Knijff**

grew up in the Victorian Alps where he developed an insatiable interest in mountain recreation, particularly cross-country skiing and bushwalking. He's skied in Canada and the USA but his most memorable activity recently was a trekking trip to Nepal, which culminated in an ascent of Mera Peak (6461 metres).



BELOW THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

# Walk-through Canyoning

The gentler side of wild, by *Sven Klinge*

AS AUSTRALIA IS PRESENTLY ENVELOPED BY dry, dusty drought conditions and much of the bush is sweltering under oppressive heat in summer, bushwalkers have fewer options when selecting their destinations. Near Sydney many of the popular camping creeks have evaporated

and much of the eucalypt bush is recovering from the inferno of Christmas 2001. And whatever escaped the carnage might not survive much longer under the present El Niño either.

Bushwalkers might want to head across the Tasman to New Zealand or do some





sea kayaking around the Whitsundays to escape the present unfavourable conditions, but surprisingly there are still sanctuaries in even the most flame-ravaged of Sydney's sandstone parks. Deep in the dark canyons that lie in the belt from the Grose River Gorge up through the Blue Mountains and western Wollemi National Park, it's always cool and lush regardless of what conflagration exists outside. The flames rarely, if at all, reach the subterranean waters of Carmarthen Brook or Bunglebooni despite charcoal being swept in from the ravaged catchments above.

What follows is a guide to some of the easier one-day walk through canyons in the western Blue Mountains and Wollemi. Visitors should note park closures and have warm clothing no matter what temperatures are forecast.

## Rocky Creek Canyon

Very popular. Some swims-wet suits highly recommended. Ropes not needed. Time: about half a day.

***'there are still sanctuaries in even the most flame-ravaged of Sydney's sandstone parks.'***

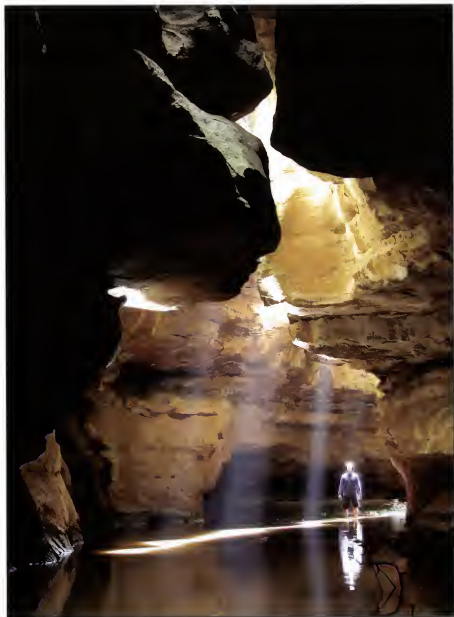
Rocky Creek is one of the most frequented canyons in the Blue Mountains due to its outstanding beauty, depth, vegetation and relative ease of access. There is a signposted car park at the end of Galah Mountain Road, reached from the Glow Worm Tunnel Road north of Lithgow. Walk down the closed fire track and soon head right, descending steeply. The access track is well trodden and heads into a ferny creek and then left downstream. The canyon suddenly starts at GR 480132 (*Rocky Hill* 1:25 000 topographical map). A broad rock platform above a waterfall is the ideal place to get suited up. In summer it can be very crowded here. A scramble down a circular hole to the right is the first obstacle. Some people jump straight in if the water level is relatively high but this is not recommended until you or someone else has checked the depth first.

If you are fortunate enough to have Rocky Creek to yourself, it is possible to do the entire length in one or two hours, but more often obstacles will create queues. These challenges include narrow pinches, awkward whirlpool-drops and log block-ups. Photography is rewarding here if you can capture the canyon with sunlight penetrating into its murky depths. Budding photographers have to time it just right to

be there at noon in late December when the sun is highest and the rays are most pronounced. Protecting the camera in a waterproof container is essential. The middle section, where the canyon bends sharply to the right, is the most dazzling in direct sun. From here you can look in two directions to see the interplay of light and shadow in the reflections, the ferns and the water.

There is a round-trip option but it entails some exposed rock scrambling so most parties return by the same route. The beach

Track (signposted as 'Mt Camron'). You'll need a four-wheel drive or high-clearance vehicle to drive to the gate at Natural Bridge (*Rocky Hill* topographical map) from the Glow Worm Tunnel Road north of Lithgow. There's a parking area just before the gate due to some wash-outs. From the saddle, walk north steeply downhill to a creek, where you will soon pick up a faint pad from the right. The track becomes fairly well formed and within 20 minutes you arrive at a major confluence (at GR



***Above, blinded by the light in River Caves Canyon. Left, the Lilo brigade poised ready for action in Bell Creek Canyon. All uncredited photos by David Noble***

where Rocky Creek meets Budgery Creek is a good lunch spot.

## River Caves Canyon

No ropes needed. Can be done in winter. Some scrub-bashing necessary for initial part. Time: 100 minutes.

A short but very aesthetically pleasing canyon just north of the Mt Cameron Fire

488102). Turn left and the canyon begins almost immediately. The cliffs soon close in and some water may need wading through although it's not very deep. The canyon is quite short but very scenic, with classic circular rock-gouging visible overhead. As you emerge on the other side, there's some boulder scrambling before you head left up a creek. Within 100 metres turn left again





and climb steeply up a small gully to gain the top of the ridge. The track then follows the ridge crest north back to the road. Just head east again to the car.

### Deep Pass Canyon

Very popular. Possible in winter. Some tricky scrambling to avoid getting wet. No wet suits needed, and fixed ropes are installed. Time: about three hours.

This canyon can be done as the second of a double header with River Caves as they are close to one another. From the northern end of Deep Pass (east of the Newnes State Forest and reached from the Glow Worm Tunnel Road north of Lithgow) a well-worn track enters the canyon to the right amidst a ferny forest floor. Unlike most canyons, this one is explored travelling *upstream*. There are some charming little pools and cascades as you ascend. Photographers will find this canyon a delight with its waterfalls and greenery. Fixed ropes (watch for wear) make scrambling up some slippery ledges a little easier. Some very tricky narrow ledges allow you to circumvent obstacles so that you only get wet up to your knees. When you get to the old, large log across the creek at the top once the canyon has opened up, head right (north) and scramble up the steep slope through a break in the cliffs. From here the track heads left back to the car park at GR 487076.

### Birrabang Canyon

Easy. Some wading but possible in winter. Rope optional for awkward descent into canyon. Time: three to four hours.

This canyon is one of the many north-western tributaries of the Grose Gorge. Park 1.3 kilometres west of the Mt Wilson turn-off on the Bells Line of Road. A small indent allows two or three cars to park on either side of the road. A track heads south over a broad ridge and down into the creek. Enter the canyon at GR 516848 (*Mt Wilson* topographical map). Some scrambling is necessary here where a large tree has fallen over. Once on the floor, head right and then left as the canyon curves round a small boulder block-up. It's not the deepest and narrowest of canyons but there are some dramatic overhangs. After a couple of hours, an exit gully appears on the right. This is the first exit option (GR 512844). The creek is normally dry here and the bed bends to the left dropping down into some large boulders. Head up the gully (reasonable grade) until the gully emerges at the

*Canyons are lush places!  
(Bell Creek)*



top. Keep left and continue climbing to the top of Dalpura Head (1025 metres). A good track then heads north along the ridge crest until you pick up an old vehicular track. This heads straight back to the Bells Line of Road. The second exit is at a gully at GR

west of the Mt Wilson turn-off (where the safety rail ends). A dirt road heads south and curves round a knoll. From here a walking track heads down the slope to the creek (GR 505857). The track is fairly well worn although once you are in the canyon

a break in the cliffs. Some good views of the Grose Gorge can be obtained here. Once again, follow a well-worn track back to the Bells Line of Road.

## Tiger Snake Canyon

Moderate grade. 50 metre rope required. Mostly dry. Time: best part of a day.

This canyon, in the upper Deanes Creek valley, has two distinct parts. Access is by the Old Coach Road, which branches off to the right as you approach the Glow Worm Tunnel. After four kilometres along the Old Coach Road you'll come to a parking area. From here, head east through pagoda country to the canyon at GR 438207 (*Ben Bullen* topographical map). The track is reasonably well formed as commercial tour operators take parties through here. The beginning of the first section is a little awkward and ropes are needed to negotiate a drop into a small pool. The rest of the canyon is fairly dry and you suddenly emerge on to a balcony. A substantial overhanging abseil is needed from the obvious tree to reach the ferny floor. Head down the creek for about 500 metres until you come to a solid land bridge. A tree here usually has anchor slings on it. This abseil requires a 50 metre rope and it's quite an experience to disappear from the outside world and enter the very narrow, very dark depths of the second stage of the canyon. Once you're at the bottom, let your eyes adjust and head upstream slightly to marvel at the enormous whirlpools that were gouged out aeons ago. Next, head downstream through the narrow crevice. The canyon soon opens



*You've got to be prepared for the occasional squeeze. (Entering Tiger Snake Canyon.)*

507842 on a right hand bend. This also leads up to Dalpura Ridge closer to Dalpura Head.

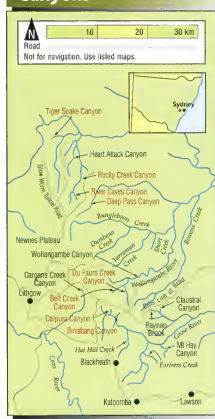
## Dalpura Canyon

Moderate grade. Five metre abseil into a pool. Need waterproof gear. Time: about four to five hours.

This is a neighbouring canyon to Birrabang. The staging area is just 2.6 kilometres

it can look somewhat overgrown. Some scrambling over mossy boulders is required as the canyon twists west and then south again. It's mostly dry and the odd pool can be scrambled round. All of a sudden the creek disappears down a narrow crevice, and a notch on a rock allows you to abseil into the pool below. The obvious exit is at the end, where you ascend the ridge through

## Blue Mountains Canyons





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up into a pleasant amphitheatre. To exit the canyon, head up on the right about 100 metres down from the amphitheatre and scramble up through a break in the cliff. The track leads back to the end of the disused vehicle track that leads from the car park.



*It's tough at the bottom! (Stage II of Wollangambe Canyon.)* Sven Klinge

## Du Faus Creek Canyon

Easy grade. Lilo and rope recommended. Best part of a day.

This is an easy-graded Liloing canyon entered by following a fire track south from Du Faus Rocks lookout near the Mt Wilson Bush Fire Brigade Station. The fire track contours round Mt Wilson before heading west along a spur. A walking track then continues along the crest down to a saddle. The most popular approach is to head right (north) from the saddle to enter the canyon by some rope normally attached to a prominent tree at GR 536890 (*Mt Wilson* topographical map). To be safe, bring a 20 metre length of hand-over-hand line just in case the installed rope isn't there. You might want to walk downstream through the initial scrubby, rocky section before inflating your Lilo. Some great, long Liloing pools are interspersed with slippery boulder hopping and sandy creek-bed walking. This canyon trip can be extended by continuing down Bell Creek to the Wollangambe River and exiting along a well-trodden track starting at GR 542913. It takes about an hour to walk back to the car at the Bush Fire Brigade, completing a pleasant and memorable circuit.

## Bell Creek Canyon


Medium grade. Floatation device and rope recommended. Lilo unnecessary but optional. Time: one long day.

Bells Creek is a longer canyon to the west of Du Faus and is deep, very narrow and decorated with wonderful, curved rock-sculpturing. Intermediate canyoners will love this challenge. Access to the start of the canyon can take three to four hours so leave early, preferably before 8 am in summer. Follow directions as for Du Faus Creek. Cross Du Faus Creek and follow a narrow track up a small, steep crevice to some rock platforms on the western bank. Contour right and then up, negotiating the rock ledges to reach the spur crest. Occasionally there are some tape markers but don't rely on them. After you reach the top of the platforms, head up through light scrub to the highest ground to the west. There wasn't much of a track along this section in early 2001 but the terrain forces you on to the right route as you converge on to a prominent ridge with some rocky outcrops. Con-

summer. You are still in the tributary of Bell Creek here, but in my opinion this beginning is as picturesque as any in the Mt Wilson region. The canyon here is extremely crevice-like in places and in the middle of the day the sun will create lovely reflections on the rocks and ferns. The wet sections requiring swimming are short and there are plenty of dry parts to take photographs. You soon come to the open confluence with Bell Creek. Head right (downstream). There is quite a bit of boulder- and log scrambling that will be awkward, slippery and time consuming. At times, progress is painstakingly slow and you might even have to rely on your 20 metre length of rope occasionally if rock scrambling isn't your scene. Other sections are mesmerising and rewarding for their sheer beauty, especially the pools. Wet suits are necessary here as the water is very cold even on the hottest summer days. The canyon widens as you proceed north and occasional landing areas are suitable for rests or as lunch spots. Towards the end, Du Faus Creek is passed on the right and shortly after, the Wollangambe River on the left. This lower section is more a traditional creek than a canyon and it's simply a scrubby river walk to the exit point at GR 542913. It takes about an hour to walk back up to Mt Wilson from the bottom.

## Planning your own

Try not to be too ambitious when planning canyoning adventures as they are often time-consuming due to the slow progression, and tricky entries and exits. Rough canyons can be hard work and a certain lassitude develops after a long day subjected to cold temperatures, so pack plenty of high-energy food. Nothing saps your energy more than shivering and you should take a woollen jumper or two.

Consult Rick Jamieson's *Canyons Near Sydney*, or the Web site of either of the two David Nobles for more ideas. 



*More gut-busting exertion. (In Bell Creek Canyon.)*

tinue ascending, following the ridge crest as it curves south-west. The track heads over a flat plateau before descending steeply into a gully. Some more rock platforms are encountered. The track is intermittent here and some scrambling is necessary to keep following the creek. Turn right at the confluence with a tributary of Bell Creek and head north. You soon come to a log giving access to the canyon proper at GR 523896. In January 2001, a new, slippery nylon rope was installed here, but canyoners may want to take a 20-30 metre length of their own hand-over-hand line to ensure a safe descent. A nice pool provides a refreshing dip after a potentially hot walk during mid-

## Sven Klinge

is the author of a number of walking, camping, and mountain-biking guidebooks on Australia and New Zealand and has been a *Wild* contributor for several years. His last book was the hard-cover *Classic Walks of Australia*. Sven divides his time between a desk job, the outdoors and travelling overseas.





# The Mighty MacKenzie

Paddling Canada's biggest river, by Benjamin Woolhouse

**TO THE NATIVE DENE PEOPLE** OF Canada's North-west Territories, the MacKenzie River is known as Deh Cho—Big River. At 1500 kilometres long, an average width of two kilometres and as wide as five kilometres in some sections, it's easy to see how it was christened. Deh Cho is the largest river in Canada and second in North America only to the Mississippi.

Dene natives have used the river for transport and food for thousands of years. Fish camps are set up at the mouths of the tributaries where kony, white fish, Arctic grayling, and the ubiquitous northern pike are caught in gill nets, smoked and stored for the long, dark winter. Of course the Dene natives no longer travel nomadically in dugout canoes. Small 'tinnies' and speedboats are much kinder to the back and shoulders, and travel between their home villages and fish camps takes a day or two, rather than a week or two.

European settlers named the river after the great pioneer explorer Alexander MacKenzie, who was the first white man to paddle it in 1789, MacKenzie, hoping that the river flowed west into the Pacific and could serve as an important transport route, covered up to 100 kilometres a day, aided by his team of native paddlers. Due to magnetic variation, opportunistic and wishful thinking, he believed that he

was heading west. It was not until he neared the river mouth delta and the Baltic Sea that he realised his mistake and named Deh Cho 'Disappointment River'. He did, however, make friends and fur-trading partners with the natives. In the years that followed, trading posts were established along the river, some of which grew into the small communities that are there today. There is also a history of gold and oil exploration along the river.

The paddling season lasts only five months. For more than half the year the river is covered with a thick layer of ice. The southern end doesn't break up until May while the northern end above the Arctic Circle can stay frozen until mid-June. From July to October, with 24 hours of sunlight to keep the water in liquid form, there is a burst of activity on the river. Most of the traffic comprises locals out fishing, hunting or visiting friends along the river. An occasional tugboat takes barges with supplies to the isolated communities in the far north. Sometimes there are also handfuls of crazy tourists, like us, who insist on doing it the hard way—by paddle power in canoe or kayak. By November, Deh Cho has already begun to freeze.

In the five-month window, I'd managed to get a group of five together to tackle the entire river. Two Australians (Ryland and myself), two Americans



*Above, after a week paddling through prairies, Erin Corra is inspired by the sight of the Camsell Mountains. Below, Eleni Papatestas reflects on the Camells. All photos by Ben Woolhouse*





(Eleni and Vicky) and one Briton (Vicky) to fill two canoes and one sea kayak. Our endpoint was Inuvik, a town in the middle of the river's delta. Inuvik is also the end of Canada's northernmost road, the Dempster Highway. It is an 800 kilometre stretch of dirt joining the Yukon Territory's Klondike Highway, making it the supply hub for all Arctic communities.

I'd heard that the mosquitoes and bugs were pretty bad, so bad that I should defin-

and backwards. Following the river north-west, we were paddling straight into the prevailing weather. Several times we were caught as storms rapidly engulfed us, the water turning from a mirror into one metre waves within five minutes. Paddling ashore meant that we had to angle the boats' sides to the waves. We'd grit our teeth, tie everything down and paddle hard, trying in between each wave to edge a little closer to the shore. Sometimes we made it to the shore and would build a little tepee the way the locals had taught us. Or we would emerge cold, wet and tired out of the other side of the big, black storm cloud and be congratulated for our efforts by the most intense rainbows we'd ever seen.

the winter—with 24 hours of darkness you could have a fantastic sleep any time and wake up feeling great.

The locals and native peoples of the Northwest Territories were amazingly friendly. Kids would run down and meet us as we paddled in, delighted to guide us through the backyards of their town—population: less than a hundred. Our newly found little friends in Wrigley wanted us to take them swimming. We checked with their parents who asked whether we were adults and could swim. When we assured them that we were and we could, they simply replied, 'Oh that's great. Maybe you can teach the kids how to swim!'

At Fort Good Hope we were invited to the local dance. We were the only white people there. The girls' blonde hair and our bushy beards provided extra entertainment for the kids, who would shyly sneak up under

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### ***'With one kilometre of water either side of us, we were out of the mosquitoes' reach.'***

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As we edged further north and went deeper into summer, we were gaining 20 to 30 minutes of daylight each day. When we began our paddling trip out of Fort Providence in early June, the sun wasn't setting until 1 a.m. Then there were four hours of a strange twilight until the sun rose

at 5 a.m. not far from the place where it had set. Each day we moved north, sunset and sunrise got closer and closer towards each other. Our body clocks had broken down and our sleep patterns were all over the place.

We'd set up camp and eat dinner as the sun began to set at 1 a.m. By 2 a.m. the sun had dipped behind the trees and we would try to sleep, only to be woken an hour later by the rising sun. Being totally exhausted, we would pull a jacket or something over our heads and try for another couple of hours of shut-eye. But by 7 a.m., the sun was high in the sky and our little tents had turned into saunas. So we'd drag ourselves out of the tent, emerging tired and sweaty but unable to sleep another wink. Ry and Vicky developed a strategy of getting up at 5 a.m., pegging their tent on its side and then going back to bed on the ground, in the shade of the tent. Ry was hoping to see the northern lights—aurora borealis—but for two months we didn't even see a star. At our furthest point north, on the other side of the Arctic Circle in Inuvik, the sun was neither setting nor rising. Our GPS told us that sunset was at 3 a.m., and sunrise was also at 3 a.m.

When we visited native communities, little children would be running around at 2 a.m. We weren't the only ones to have trouble sleeping. Some locals told us they preferred

tables and chairs, quickly stick their heads out to say hello and then run off laughing.

We met locals out fishing, always willing to give us some tips and share a hot drink and a few stories. At the end of one day's particularly tough paddling, we pulled up on to a cosy beach to avoid the nasty storm that was fast approaching. As we dragged our canoes up the beach we were greeted by a big, white smile of a native lady and her daughter, full of questions about our journey. Further down the beach five or six guys waved, busy preparing a caribou they had caught. They were travelling in two outboard skiffs from the capital town of Yellowknife, visiting friends and family along the river while catching some fish.

The woman was quick to invite us to share their caribou which, she assured us, was delicious. Having never eaten caribou, we were excited and started to set up camp. The woman went to tell the men that they had guests. Five minutes later, she ran back over to us and told us that the beach wasn't very flat and that there was a much better beach just around the next headland. We were to follow them and on this nice beach we would have a feast.

The five of us looked nervously at the sky; enormous black clouds were towering over the opposite river-bank. But we pushed back into the water, which was already beginning to get choppy, and followed in the wake of the outboards. Within a few minutes it started to rain, the wind picked up and the waves grew to a height of 60 centimetres. No problem, we thought. We'd soon be around a big bonfire munching on caribou. We paddled around the headland, but there was nobody in sight, so on we pushed, thinking that we must be nearly there...



itely be taking a head net and litres of repellent. But so far my experience with annoying little insects had been limited to humid jungle climates. I didn't think they'd be too bad...

Once we crossed the Rocky Mountains and dropped into the prairie lands, before we'd even started paddling, we entered the bug zone. After just one unbearable evening of slapping ourselves silly and smearing mosses all over the inside walls of our tents, we bought a bug tent, head nets and lots of 100 per cent deet—the only stuff strong enough for these menaces.

There were moments of grace—when the wind was howling or if it was raining hard, or both. Here, the immense size of the river was a saviour. With one kilometre of water either side of us, we were out of the mosquitoes' reach. Unfortunately, we were still within range of the bigger and tougher black flies. They buzzed around us, waiting until we stopped moving so that they could come in and land on a prime piece of meat. Every few strokes we would swing the paddle in a circle around our heads. More often than not someone, with a satisfying whack, would connect with one of the little buggers, bringing a smile and cheer from everyone.

When the wind picked up the bugs were blown ashore, but there was little to celebrate as we, too, were being blown ashore—



Soaking wet, we battled through the storm, dreaming about what other treats these friendly people had in store for us, maybe even beer.

An hour later, our backs and shoulders burning, we pulled round the next headland and there were the two boats and our new friends setting up camp. Relieved, we yelled hello and waved. They turned but did not wave back, and quick as a flash they had thrown everything back into their boats and taken off again, further down the river, never to be seen again.

We shed tears as we cooked up yet another billy full of pasta. To cheer ourselves up we imagined what evil we would do to them if we ever saw the canbou people again.

To ensure the well-being of the local villages, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have officers stationed in most sizeable communities. They also keep tabs on tourists in the area and we had to check in with them on the way. As there is a shortage of Mounties

willing to live in remote towns with mosquito-infested summers and months of winter darkness, all rookie Mounties are required to complete two years of service in the far north before being transferred to a more favourable area.

Some of the Mounties to whom we spoke were anxious to get their two years over and done with while others had fallen in love with the far north, the friendly natives and the untouched wilderness.

The Mountie of Tghigneche had spent several years in the area. To cope with the long, dark winters he had installed a large-screen cable TV above his indoor spa. He loved the relaxed nature of the job, having only to deal with minor problems such as teenagers getting a bit too drunk or a new mother running out of nappies in the middle of the night. To date, the biggest crime he'd had to solve was to find the drunk who knocked down the letters C, H, I, C, of Tghigneche's Hollywood-style welcome sign with a bulldozer. He followed the cat-

pillars tracks to the culprit's house where the bulldozer was parked in the front yard with the driver passed out at the wheel.

Over the months on the river, we met five other paddling groups. Some of them were doing a solo paddle, others were in a canoe with their pet husky and 40 kilograms of dog food. In a remote area like this news travelled fast and everybody we met told us of other paddlers that had passed by.

So, when in our fourth week we saw two sea kayaks ahead of us, we knew that they were the boys from Delaware, USA. They planned to reach the polar ice-cap, and were carrying a shotgun for bear safety, which they now turned to the sky and potted us a duck to stew. We camped at the mouth of a tributary river, feasting on the delicious duck stew. It was here that we learned about 'bush madness'—any mental condition derived from spending extended time in the bush. This madness could include: total loss of knowledge of time, day

*Taking advantage of a tepee left on the shore by locals, a very weary crew sits out yet another storm.*

## MacKenzie River






or month; hallucinations about wildlife such as the deadly tree stump bear; illusions that the dirt covering your body is actually a tan; scooping out handfuls of peanut butter to snack on; paddling and walking around camp butt naked; thinking that it's normal to eat two kilograms of oats for brekky every day.

The boys had spent a couple of days in the last village and had bought a fishing net from one of the natives. He had taught them how to set the net with empty bottles as floats and rocks as weights and to place it in an eddy at the mouth of a river. They

worked a treat. We filled a couple of bags with strips of smoked kony to snack on and left our two new friends to take care of the rest of the fish. Later we found out that a large grizzly bear visited the camp-site not long after we left. It seemed that we weren't the only ones to like kony.

As we approached the delta we enjoyed a rare tail-wind. Rafting the three boats together, we improvised some masts and sails using paddles, sticks and our tent ground-sheets. The wind blew us slowly towards the delta.

burgers and bed kept us going. At 4 am on 18 July the five of us triumphantly staggered out of our boats for the last time.

When I think back now on the beauty and untouched wilderness we saw, and the river as our friend and enemy, I try to imagine what it would look like in winter—1500 kilometres of frozen river blanketed in deep snow reflecting the aurora borealis through 24-hour darkness, wolverine, lynx, moose, caribou and other creatures of the Arctic leaving footprints as they scavenge for food. And know that I will go back. 



*Cleaning up in preparation for arrival in the town of Arctic Red River.*

had only used the net once before and had caught two nice kony—a tasty white fish that we had been unable to catch. So we set up the net, and went to bed with fingers crossed that we might have a kony for breakfast.


In the morning we started to pull in the net, but it seemed to be tangled. It took three of us to pull it in, revealing a catch of 11 huge fish, their mouths opened wide in astonishment. For breakfast we cooked up blackened, seasoned kony that would have sold for a hundred dollars down south, and ate ourselves silly. Then, feeling very bloated, we set about making a smoker for the rest of the fish. The site was obviously popular with the locals as we found a filleting table and smoker stashed in the trees. The smoker was the inside tub of an old washing-machine with a grate latched on top, but it

The river's delta is the eighth-largest in the world. Hundreds of islands are spread over an immense area—a haven for many different species of birds who can roost safely there. We weaved our way through the maze, following the channel markers that guide the barges to Inuvik.

The town of Inuvik is a fairly new settlement, a relocation of the original Inuit village of Aklavik. 'Experts' deemed Aklavik to be sinking and arranged for the entire town to be moved to the present site of Inuvik. A handful of natives stubbornly refused to move and are still in Aklavik—which is yet to show any sign of sinking. The town motto is 'never say die'.

In the channels of the delta we were protected from the wind. We spent the last 80 kilometres gliding through glassy water. With the end so close, thoughts of beer,

**Benjamin Woolhouse**  
 can't sit still for long. His work as an outdoor education teacher, ski instructor, sea-kayak guide and surf instructor all helps to fund his thirst for travel. At present he can be found surfing Bells Beach or mountain biking the hills behind Anglessea, Victoria.





# Walking Australia's Rooftop

Liz Leyshan walks the Australian Alps Walking Track alone



*The author surveys the upper Howqua River valley from Hells Window, Victoria. All uncredited photos by Liz Leyshan*

I WAS PERCHED ON A ROCKY OUTCROP OF the Cobberas No 1. I took a deep breath as my eyes lit up and my body filled with adrenalin. I could see Mt Kosciuszko and the Main Range and knew that I was days away from reaching their heights. Even now,

journey. Not only was the journey my dream, but it was also a way for me to raise funds and support for the Crossing Land Education Centre—a not-for-profit environmental education camp to be built near Berm-

***'my courage and confidence are lifted by thoughts of having lived out my dream'***

months after finishing my nine-week fundraising walk, my courage and confidence are lifted by thoughts of having lived out my dream to complete the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT).

A mere four weeks earlier I had grabbed my rucksack and started out on a 700 kilometre

agui on the far south coast of New South Wales. It's a project close to my heart because it is about simple living, sustainability and young people learning by doing, just like my walk.

I started walking through the fern forest beyond Walhalla on 2 March 2002. I had planned the big walk with a solo attempt in mind, expecting friends to join me when

they could. As it turned out, I spent seven-and-a-half weeks of the journey travelling solo, which gave me time to think and opportunity to be drawn from one magnificent vista of Australia's wilderness to another.





In my first week, sweating in the depths of the Thompson catchment, I found the most physically challenging terrain of the journey. Over three consecutive days I ascended more than 600 metres each day only to descend them in the afternoon for a camp-site with water. I also contended with thousands of March flies that appeared to follow me. Each evening when I put up my tent I would find live March flies buzzing out of the material folds!

When I wearily climbed out of the Thompson catchment for the last time, I was eight kilograms lighter. But the weight loss didn't end there.

After Mt Skene I camped on Mt Sunday with a lovely couple whom I had met that evening. They offered me a meal of fresh vegetables and pork. A real Sunday special but the pork didn't agree with me. The next day I was sick. I was dehydrated and weak and lost another two kilograms! Feeling better, I headed north towards the unforgettable Crosscut Saw and into the Viking-Razor area.

## The Australian Alps Walking Track



At Macalister Springs I watched the sun disappear and work its coloured magic into the jagged edge of the Crosscut Saw. The rugged and powerfully uplifted terrain is very dramatic as it descends into the Wonangatta valley. It didn't take me long to realise the popularity of Macalister Springs. It was the Easter holidays and numerous bushwalkers filled the tiny camp-site within six hours. I counted over 60 people at the Springs, not including walkers who headed to Mt Speculation.

After Mt Speculation the AAWT follows the notoriously dry Barry Mountains to Mt Hotham. It's important to be prepared for the Barry Mountains. I'd contacted Parks Victoria about the reliability of water in the

tank at Barry Saddle before starting out. Their advice was, don't count on it, so I didn't.

My Scottish friend Kate Russell joined me for a week after the Barmies. She took some time out of her travel plans and walked with me over the Bogong High Plains. The Bogong High Plains reminded Kate of Scotland. For me, it was like visiting an old friend. I had previously walked the plains, but never reached Mt Bogong itself. When Kate and I got to the summit of Mt Bogong, I was very excited, bouncing about, looking around at every knoll, rock and the clear surrounding views. My muscles felt the challenge of climbing Mt Bogong, which made standing on the top even more rewarding. Later that day Kate and I found a lovely swimming-hole at Howmans Falls. We couldn't resist a skinny dip in the depths of the icy water.

At the Cobberas my mum, a couple of uncles and a family friend joined me. We did a day walk up to Cobberas No 1 (there are two of them). Then I continued my ex-

know what was going on, but I thought it might be the National Parks & Wildlife Service burning off. I found a waterhole in open country to escape to if necessary and thought it would be advisable to move away from the huts considering that two 44-gallon drums of aviation fuel were nearby! As it turned out the smoke faded by the end of day and I was soon out of any immediate danger.

Wildlife was plentiful in the Pilot area and included three brumbies that followed me from Tin Mine Huts to Boggy Plains near Dead Horse Gap. Perhaps they had some sort of genetic memory of the Gap!

I met up with Anne Clarke and her sister Gaye at Thredbo village. They had my next food drop. They both walked with me up to the summit of Mt Kosciuszko. I had never been to the summit so it was great to share this experience, even if we had to share the mountain with 100 other people. Compared with climbing Mt Bogong, climbing Mt Kosciuszko was far too easy. Due to



The author contemplates one of Australia's most famous rivers, the Snowy, near Mt Kosciuszko, New South Wales.

pedition on to the Pilot solo. I missed the company of walking partners but soon got back into the rhythm of walking alone. I was beginning to immerse myself in the tranquillity of the landscape when six motor bikes and a four-wheel-drive zoomed past me, interrupting the silence.

My travels led me across the Victoria-NSW border at Cowombat Flat towards Mt Kosciuszko. During the planning for my walk I had prepared myself for many situations such as incidents requiring first aid and getting lost. I had also considered bushfires.

When I found myself surrounded by smoke near Tin Mine Huts I had to think seriously about what to do. Although bloody scared, I kept calm and walked to the huts. I didn't

the overcast and wet weather I decided to leave the Main Range early and walked up Whites River corridor to Mt Jagungal. It was the time of the NSW school holidays so I shared the mountains with many adventurous and friendly people, which made for some entertaining nights.

When I got to Mawsons Hut I didn't expect time to be literally taken away from me. Infamous Muldoon the rattus stole my watch in the depth of night. I heard a rat dragging something across the tin roof but didn't know what it was until I noticed my watch missing the next morning. I thought this couldn't be right. So I searched in my pack, through my gear and under the floorboards of the hut. Nothing!



# THERM-A-REST

THE ORIGINAL SELF-INFLATING MATTRESS

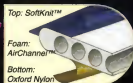
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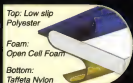


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Around week seven I took a different route from the AAWT and walked further east, towards the Bulls Peaks and on to Cesjacks Hut. It was a beautiful day and one that will stay for ever imbedded in my mind. The Mt Jagungal area is one of the best in Kosciuszko National Park. Granite tors stick out of the ground like hump-back whales breaching.

I caught up with friends including Dean, Annette and Iye Turner from the Crossing near Cesjacks Hut for another food drop. They provided a roast dinner and fine coastal wine, which was luxurious indeed. It made my granite whales and stories get bigger and bigger as the night progressed. The next day I headed for Kiandra by way of Happy Jacks Plain. I was happy, too.

When I got to Four Mile Hut my mood changed from relaxed to agitated. It was 11 days before I was due to finish and I had begun to feel the effects of being on my own. I was lonely, and hungry for the company of people and for conversation. It

a group of horse-riders, and two lovely families, the Coles and Mooneys from Gundagai, who invited me into their camp and let me have a shower in the back of their horse truck. Luxury! When I got to Blue Waterholes people who had heard of my walkathon from fliers posted at Coolamine and Oldfields Huts greeted me. Some of these people came to the reception at Namadgi Visitors Centre. It was a great feeling to know that people were supporting my walk.

Coming down Mt Tenant was full on. I still can't believe I got my worst blisters on my last day! My knees took some punishment; they had walked more than 680 kilometres and the steepness of Mt Tenant tested me.

When I was a couple of kilometres from finishing, author Klaus Hueneker strode up with a big smile to greet me. I had never met him but had thought I would like to after reading his books at Mawsons Hut.

## Liz Leyshan

is a keen bushwalker who also enjoys cross-country skiing and kayaking. Liz has coordinated the work of thousands of volunteers on conservation projects in NSW and Victoria over the last five years. She is committed to providing opportunities for young people to learn by doing and that is why she is currently Coordinator at the Crossing Land Education Centre.




took a day to get over it and refocus on why I was doing the walk. I wanted to finish the walk on a high. The strange thing is that my day of refocusing and thinking turned out to be one of my last days alone.

Once I got to Whites Hut I met people every day. It was still school holidays and people were everywhere. I caught up with



*The author on the Cobberas No 1 looking north over the Cobberas No 2 and the other Cobberas peaks, in Victoria, towards the Pilot in NSW. Jim Betts*

Crossing into Namadgi National Park was a milestone, the vegetation noticeably changing from the limestone to granite geology. Crossing the Cotter catchment was beautiful. I saw plenty of wildlife including a species of wallaby that I hadn't seen before. The last day of the walk was really exciting as I eagerly looked forward to joining friends and supporters of the walk at Namadgi Visitor Centre. In fact, the only thing between me and the visitor centre was Mt Tenant. It proved to be more challenging than I had thought.

Klaus had heard of me through the Kosciuszko Huts Association and thoughtfully came to meet and congratulate me on my expedition. The longest single walk I have ever completed was almost over. A reception held by the Kosciuszko Huts Association and ACT Parks & Conservation Service had me smiling all night. Other board members from the Crossing congratulated me with the news that I had raised \$3000 for the Crossing. Fit and happy, I concluded that doing rather than dreaming is very rewarding. 

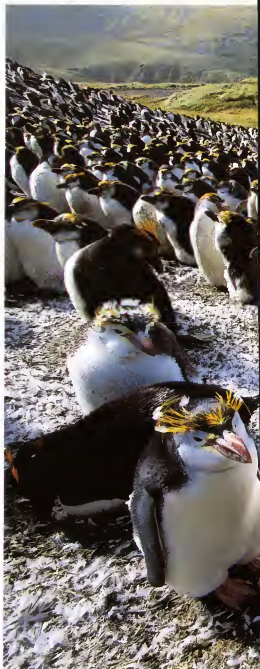


# Up close and personal

Macquarie Island's feathered friends,  
by Grant Dixon



*Light-mantled sooty albatross chick.*



*Moulting royal penguins.*









*King penguins and kelp, Sandy Bay.*





*Rockhopper penguin.*

Grant Dixon works part time for the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service and has spent much of his free time exploring and photographing remote parts of the world. However, he is always drawn home to the wild, natural landscapes of South-west Tasmania.





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*Example of expansion between flat elastic core stitched Hugga and a normal stitched sleeping bag using the same pattern.*



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OVERLAND TRACK

• Mount Ossa  
• Mount Merrindale

Waterfall Valley  
• Bass Strait  
• Cradle Mountain

Roaming through  
Waterfall Valley...

Mount Pelion Way

• Mount Merrindale

On the Overland Track green became  
my new favourite colour.

CRADLE MOUNTAIN

• Mount Pelion Way

LAKE ST CLAIR

• Mount Ossa

NATIONAL PARK

• Mount Ossa

• Mount Ossa

• Mount Ossa

• Lake St Clair

• Cradle Mountain

• Cradle Mountain

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# The Central Reserve

The Arm River Track and suggested side-trips in the heart of Tasmania's Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, by *Andrew Hughes*



*Mt Oakeleigh in frosty garb, from Pelion Plains. Andrew Hughes*

**LYING IN THE HEART OF THE CRADLE** Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, the Pelion Plains are a welcome respite for walkers on the Overland Track. Marking the halfway point of this famous track, it is often used to rest weary muscles and dry sodden gear in the spacious new hut. A shorter route to the area is from the east by way of the Arm River Track. Forestry and hydroelectric operations in the Mersey valley have provided access roads to the edge of the National Park making the walk measurable in hours rather than days.

The attraction of this track is the opportunity to set up a base at Pelion and, unburdened by an overnight pack, explore the region at leisure. It's ideal for a weekend dash or a five-day extravaganza.

## When to go

The Arm River Track is accessible all year round. As it is in the Tasmanian highlands, walkers must always be equipped for wet and cold conditions.

Summer is the popular walking season with more settled weather and longer daylight hours. Expect the hut and surrounding areas to be heavily populated. The mix of nationalities and the jovial atmosphere created by the Overland Track walkers is welcomed by some and overwhelms others.

The crowds begin to disperse through April and May, and by June winter peace has returned to the mountains. If you've got the luxury of picking the few fine days sandwiched between the weeks of wind and rain, and are looking for quieter moments, this is the time to go. Fresh snow blankets the peaks and thick frosts sweep the plain. Be warned though that the weather is quick to change and icy track conditions can be treacherous.

Spring often resembles winter but the days are stretching out and the wild flowers are beginning to blossom. Snow is still common and other walkers are still fairly uncommon. Every season offers something different; sunshine, snow, storms, company or solace. Sometimes you'll get a small piece of everything.

## Access

The maze of sealed roads through Tasmania's north coast hinterland is intricate and difficult to navigate for first-time visitors. Take a road map to find Mole Creek, the town nearest to the start of the walk. Drive west from there (road B12, C138) through rolling farmland beneath the northern escarpment of the Central Plateau to Lake Rowallan. The sealed road continues up the western edge of the Mersey valley (road C171) with frequent views of the river and catchment dam. The road turns to gravel. Follow this for 500 metres before a right turn up the signposted Arm Road. Continue up this road past the Outdoor Education Centre for 14 kilometres until a sign for the Arm River Track points right up a spur road. It is a further one kilometre to the car park.

## Arm River Track

A small creek crosses the track where it leaves the car park. You will soon be tugging up a long hill so either take a long drink or carry water from here. Follow the open track west through mixed eucalypt forest for 700 metres until it gradually steepens and then rapidly ascends the valley. The large boulder about halfway up is perfect to drape yourself over and peer through the trees to the western buttresses of the Central Plateau. An hour from the car park you will be sweating liberally but putting the Mersey valley behind you.

A wooden sign welcomes you to the National Park and proclaimed World Heritage Area. An old track veers left just before the sign and follows the open valley floor beneath Mt Pillinger. The new track, which you should follow unless climbing Mt Pillinger, is well marked. After a short rise you pass Lake Price with a commanding view of the precipitous profile of Mt Pillinger, and soon enter a small patch of mossy rainforest. The track descends slightly to meet the open plain where the old valley track rejoins. Wind over Wurragarra Creek on a small bridge and round a small tarn to view the mountains to the south.



A long, slow descent follows part of the old Innes Track. In 1896 EG Innes was commissioned to cut a track from Liena to Rosebery to reach the western mineral prospects. The gentle gradient and easy progress bear testimony to his track-making ability.

You will emerge from the forest on to the edge of Pelion Plains near Lake Ayr. There are excellent views from the end of the lake to Mt Pelion West. A walker's registration box near here is also where a track from Lees Paddocks joins from the south-east. Follow the main track west a further three kilometres to Pelion Hut. Five minutes before the hut you'll cross Douglas Creek. Fossicking in the river cobbles will reveal abundant fossils; have a look and leave them there.

After three to five hours' walking, and about ten kilometres, the grand structure of Pelion Hut appears on the edge of the plains. Sleeping 60 smelly bushwalkers and with verandah views of Mt Oakleigh, the new hut has attracted mixed public comment. It may take a few years to snuggle into the bushwalkers' generally resistant psyche but in general it is both comfortable and appropriate. The second compelling structure, bigger than you'd expect, is the fully lockable and decidedly composting toilet. You're not allowed to sleep in there. Several tent platforms and plain old bare ground are available to pitch a tent.

overnight pack is a hard slog but with only your small day pack you can giggle agreeably and turn right up the Mt Ossa track. The well-marked track sidles the south side of Mt Doris and then climbs steeply up Mt Ossa. Several sections are very exposed, so in wet, cloudy or very windy conditions it would be unwise to continue.

Returning to the intersection you have two choices. If daylight and energy reserves permit, Mt Pelion East will beckon you onward. Although it doesn't have the drawing power of the highest peak in the State it is a worthwhile side-trip. The track heads straight up through a stand of snow gums (*Eucalyptus coccifera*) and into a field of scoparia and other assorted alpine shrubs. Walkers are requested to fan out in some areas so take note of the signs. The summit is gained by following cairns through to the rocky pinnacle. To claim both peaks and return to

clearly flaunting minimal-impact principles. The track continues steeply through rainforest to the south-west edge of the February Plains. Mt Oakleigh itself protrudes outward and slightly upwards from this raised plateau. The track clatters along with gentle up, down and up for one kilometre to the indistinct summit. At only 1280 metres it is one of the smaller peaks in the park but because of its detachment there are excellent views.

The full return trip from the hut will take between two and four hours. The steep forest climb is tiring but overall it is an easy-to-medium-grade walk. Also keep in mind that, due to its position and height, Mt Oakleigh can be clearer than other nearby peaks on those frequent 'hmm' days.

### Old Pelion Hut/copper mine

When the sky is grey and grim expressions prevail there is an alternative to the lofty mountain tops. Walk west along the Overland Track for 15 minutes to the signpost on the edge of the button-grass plain. Turn right and amble a further five minutes to Old Pelion Hut along a clear track. This is the oldest hut in the National Park, built in the early 1900s to house workers at the nearby copper- and silver-mine.

Walkers can sleep in the hut or pitch a tent as an alternative to the New Pelion Hut. Follow a rough track past the toilet on the south side of the creek for 100 metres to view the old mine workings. Unless you brought a hard hat and a geotechnical engineer don't enter any black holes.

Back at the hut a track leads down to a bridge crossing Douglas Creek. This is the end of the Forth Valley or Zigzag Track. This largely disused track starts at the abandoned wolfram mines seven kilometres down the Forth valley. Before the descent begins there are good views of Mt Oakleigh, Mt Pelion West, Mt Theis and Mt Ossa. Continuing on a couple of kilometres, you will descend below the spires of Mt Oakleigh and into a mature rainforest. If it's raining there's no better place to be. For most people this is far enough but if you're springy of leg you can continue down to the wolfram mines and make it a full day-trip. The track is indistinct in places so careful navigation may be required.

## the walk AT A GLANCE

<b>Grade</b>	Easy-medium
<b>Length</b>	Two-five days
<b>Type</b>	Base camp with day-trips, mountains, rainforest, highland plains
<b>Region</b>	Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair National Park
<b>Nearest town</b>	Hole Creek
<b>Start/finish</b>	At the start of the Arm River Track
<b>Maps</b>	Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park 1:100 000. Detailed coverage on the series maps Rowallan, Cathedral, Achilles and Will 1:25 000.
<b>Best time</b>	Spring, early summer, autumn
<b>Special points</b>	Fuel-stove-only area, National Park pass required

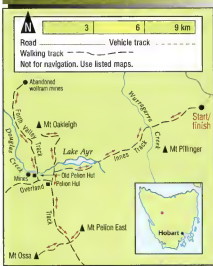
Pelion should take from seven to nine hours although this varies greatly depending on the individual and on prevailing conditions.

### Mt Oakleigh

Resting at the hut in the evening your eyes will be hopelessly drawn to the craggy silhouette of Mt Oakleigh. Sipping your cup of tea on the verandah, you might hear it whisper quietly in the wind, inviting, daring, urging you to clamber to its summit. If you're tempted you'll be rewarded.

Retrace the Arm River Track for five minutes back to Douglas Creek. A signpost points north across the button-grass plain to the foot of the mountain. The track is in terrible condition with braiding and many deep bogs. If you emerge clean on the far side you have been dodging the mud and

## Pelion Plains



### Side-trips

#### Mt Ossa/Mt Pelion East

Tackling Tasmania's highest peak from Pelion is a challenging but achievable day walk. From the hut, walk south along the Overland Track beside Douglas Creek. After two kilometres the gentle walking deteriorates into an uphill slog through mossy rainforest. Pelion Cap (1126 metres) is the saddle between Mt Doris and Mt Pelion East. A large wooden platform has been built at the intersection. You may see several full packs sitting here waiting for their owners to return from the Mt Ossa or Pelion East climb. Gaining Pelion Cap from Pelion with a full

### Summary

The beauty of this walk is its outrageous variety. It can be a two-day foray to the hut and return, or a longer stay with all the side-trips included. In appalling weather you might decide just to sit around and play cards on the shiny, metal benches in the hut. Next day, part of your group might attempt Mt Ossa and part might soak up some history at Old Pelion Hut. Without heavy packs to lump around and not a care in the world, where would you rather be? ■

Andrew Hughes divides his time between his Tasmanian-based guiding company and devising new ways to hibernate in winter. When he's not walking Andrew enjoys barbecues, watching footy with the lads, and fine Tasmanian beers.



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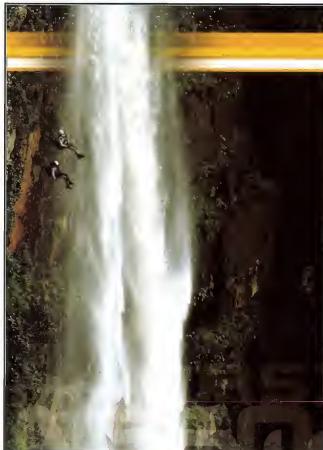
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# Northern Bogong High Plains circuit

Peaks without the puff, by Glenn van der Knijff

WHEN MOST PEOPLE THINK OF CLIMBING A mountain they envisage a long and tedious climb to a prominent, lofty viewpoint. However, most of the 'mountains' on the Bogong High Plains of the Victorian Alps are nothing more than a small rise—often more akin to a large mound than a major hill—and require little effort to climb. On the 'high plains', particularly in the area around Mt Nelse, there are seemingly endless opportunities for bushwalks, from short family strolls to tougher, week-long options. There is a variety of scenery to interest all walkers, from look-out summits, to pretty snow-gum glades, to deep valleys. And a number of old cattle-men's huts spark the enthusiasm of those with an interest in the local history.

Encompassing many of the highlights of the Bogong High Plains, this circuit walk of a moderate grade begins at Howmans Gap and quickly descends into the deep valley of Rocky Valley Creek before climbing steeply on to the high plateau bordering Mt Nelse. After crossing this large, barren expanse of treeless terrain, the route drops into the more sheltered area of snow plains south of Mt Nelse before making its way through the ski area of Falls Creek (itself an excellent

base for short walks on the plains) and then returning to the Howmans Gap.

This walk is well within the capabilities of most moderately fit walkers; the toughest section is the first half day to the summit of Spion Kopje. The remainder of the walk from this point is regarded as easy, without tough climbs, and only a steepish 500 metre descent at the end of the second day.

## When to go

November to May is the most appropriate time for this high-mountain walk, with summer generally regarded as the best season. Extreme alpine conditions can occur in the cooler months (including lots of snow in winter) but even during summer the nights can be chilly. Water is reliable along the route where mentioned and wild flowers are prolific in the summer months.

## Safety

Much of this walk is above the tree line and is exposed to severe weather, so be prepared for cold and wet conditions at any time of the year.

## Further reading

Other walk ideas for the Bogong High Plains are in a number of excellent guidebooks including *Victoria's Alpine National Park* by John Siseman, *Lonely Planet's Walking in*

## The walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Moderate
Length	Two days
Type	Mountain scenery; alpine ash, snow-gum forests and exposed plains
Region	Victorian Alps
Nearest town	Mt Beauty
Start/finish	Howmans Gap
Map	Bogong Alpine Area 1:50 000 Vicmap
Best time	Late spring to mid-autumn
Special points	No camping permitted within the Falls Creek resort management boundary

*Camp-site near Spion Kopje, overlooked by Mt Bogong.*

Both photos by Glenn van der Knijff





*Australia, and 70 Walks in Victoria's Bright & Falls Creek Districts by Tyrone Thomas.*

## Access

It takes about five hours to drive the 390 kilometres from Melbourne to Howmans Gap. Follow the Hume Freeway north, then the Great Alpine Road to Myrtleford. From Myrtleford, follow the signs to Mt Beauty and on towards Falls Creek. If coming from New South Wales, Mt Beauty is 95 kilometres from Albury along the Kiawa Valley Highway. Four kilometres before reaching Falls Creek you arrive at Howmans Gap, where there is a toilet block and large holiday camp (popular with school groups). Leave your vehicle next to the toilets.

## The walk

From Howmans Gap, walk down through the recreational camp and find a foot track heading into the forest at the north-east end of the property. The track may be hard to find but there is a track marker nearby; search above a small amphitheatre but below the outdoor sports court.

The track leads into a beautiful stand of alpine ash before descending steeply to cross Rocky Valley Creek. You have to rock hop across the creek which, particularly after heavy rain, can be a little tricky. Collect water here. Once on the northern side, the track climbs steeply and you may need to scramble on all fours a few times.

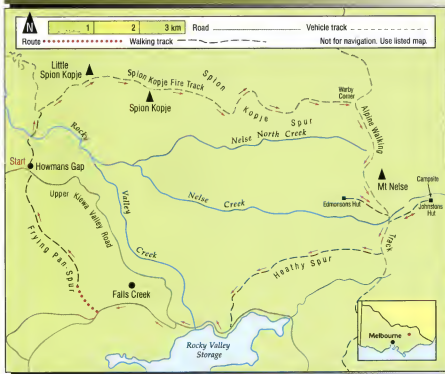
Gradually the grade eases but the track continues fairly steeply until it unexpectedly emerges from the forest and on to the Spion Kopje Fire Track. The fire track provides easier walking, at a moderate grade, as you head toward the mountain tops. Higher up, the track skirts below the high point of Little Spion Kopje before joining the ridgeline and climbing above the tree line and on to the summit of Spion Kopje (pronounced spe-on kop-ya). There

are extensive views in all directions. The next section is extremely exposed—although in fine weather there's plenty to see—and you won't pass a tree for about ten kilometres!

The route continues generally east along the Spion Kopje Spur, passing an old aqueduct along the way—the water is fresh and suitable for drinking—before climbing on to an unnamed knoll (sometimes called Mt Steadfast) which is actually the highest point



## Bogong High Plains



### *At the crossing of Rocky Valley Creek.*

on the Bogong High Plains. At Warby Corner the Spion Kopje Fire Track meets the Big River Fire Track. Turn right (south) and follow this closed vehicle track—also the route of the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT)—for about one-and-a-half kilometres to a point north-west of Mt Nelse, which is the closest spot to the 1882 metre summit. It is definitely worth making the side-trip as the 360° vistas from the top are impressive—you may even be able to see the Snowy Mountains to the north-east, although the southern ramparts of Mt Bogong tend to dominate the scene to the north.

The AAWT descends steadily to the foot of Mt Nelse from where you'll see a track heading off to the right towards Edmondsons Hut. You could camp by this hut if you wish—although I prefer to camp by Johnstons Hut—but in any case it is worth a visit. Back on the main track, walk a short way to the signposted track to Johnstons Hut on your left. Follow the track north-east into the grove of snow gums surrounding the hut, and you'll find some pleasant camp-sites. A tributary of Hollonds Creek, to the north, has water.



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### Day two

Return to the main AAWT and follow it south toward the Park, a large snow plain at the head of Watchbed Creek. About one kilometre from where you joined the AAWT you'll notice a foot track heading west towards a low hill. Take this track and it soon leads to the crest of Heathy Spur and within about an hour of easy walking over plains and through snow-gum glades you will reach the Bogong High Plains Road.

This road follows the northern shore of Rocky Valley Storage, a large reservoir that supplies water to the hydroelectric power stations in the region. In fact, most of the roads, fire tracks and aqueducts you see on the Bogong High Plains were constructed in the 1940s as part of the Kiewa Hydro-electric Scheme. Water from the storage is quite safe to drink.

Turn right and follow the dusty gravel road, soon crossing over the reservoir's dam wall, and continue for a further 500 metres to a road junction—beware of vehicular traffic along this section. Turn left and follow the signposted road toward Pretty Valley. In fact, most of the road swings sharply to the right and then ascends gradually in a north-west direction. About one kilometre from the road junction you will enter the Falls Creek ski resort proper, soon passing over some ski-runs and beneath a chair-lift. The road continues higher, passes beneath another chair-lift, then clears the tree line and tops out on to Frying Pan Spur. Leave the gravel road at the top of the spur, strike out north-west along the crest, and about 15 minutes of walking up a gradual incline will bring you to the top of Falls Creek's Summit Run and the highest point on Frying Pan Spur. Beyond the ski-lifts, a faint track continues mostly along the crest of the ridge and provides pleasant walking, with great views, to a high point at the north-west end of Frying Pan Spur. This is your last lookout point so savour the views here—Mt Fainter is immediately west of you across the deep valley of Pretty Valley Creek while the sharp summit of Mt Feathertop is visible protruding beyond the high ridge of the Niggerheads to the south-west.

Now the prominent track—recently re-cut by some local athletes—descends steeply through snow gum and, lower down, nice stands of alpine ash. You may even notice some old telegraph poles along the way which were used to carry power lines to the Falls Creek area many years ago.

As the gradient of the track begins to ease it becomes a little less prominent, but is still relatively easy to follow until you reach the Bogong High Plains Road a few hundred metres from where you started the walk. The point where the foot track joins the road is not marked, nor is it very obvious, so it may be difficult to find the track should you wish to walk the route in reverse.

See Glenn van der Krift's bio on page 29.



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# Stoves

Scott Edwards turns up the heat

## Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

MY FIRST BUSHWALKING STOVE WAS A methylated-spirits one; its beautiful simplicity appealed to my thrifty, dirt-bag lifestyle at the time. Winter trips became more frequent, so a Shellite stove was purchased for melting snow. As often happens, something fancier came along. The next stove had better flame control for gourmet meals and multifuel capabilities for overseas trips. Sad to say, all these stoves seemed so heavy I had to get a pocket-sized gas stove for light and fast excursions. Excessive? Maybe, but there just isn't one stove that does it all.

### Methylated-spirits stoves

Simplicity personified: fill the burner cup, and then light the fuel, no maintenance

required. Metho doesn't put out a lot of heat in comparison to other fuels like Shellite and gas, so you'll have to carry almost twice as much. Luckily the fuel is cheap to buy, readily available in Australian supermarkets and its low volatility makes it relatively safe. Popular kits come complete with pots and rigid windshields that make these stoves very stable. The downside is that they are tediously slow; when the temperature drops, so does stove performance. In very cold weather, they can be difficult to light and to keep running.

### Gas stoves

Gas is one of the most efficient fuels and relatively safe because it is fully con-

*Instead of a stove-cooked hot meal, Fiona Groves has to make do with just torrential rain for breakfast. (Lake Laberge, Yukon, Canada.)*  
Iain Groves





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tained in a pressurised canister. Gas stoves are simple to operate (switch on and light them), low on maintenance and supply almost instant, scorching heat. The real problems start with low temperatures, when the

pressurised gas mixes struggle to burn. This can make the stoves difficult to light and cause spluttering during operation. Some manufacturers provide varying mixes of butane, isobutane and propane to enhance

cold-weather performance but you may still have to use some canister-warming tricks. Sleep with the canister; warm it under your arm, sit on it, or even place it in a bowl of water during use.

## Stoves

	Fuel type	Dimensions, millimetres #	Stove weight, grams *	Fuel tank weight, grams **	Fuel weight, grams ***	Total weight, grams	Hose	Fuel tank type	Boiling time, minutes §	Stability	Heat control	Quietness	Value	Comments	Approx. price \$ **	
Campingaz France <a href="http://www.campingaz.com">www.campingaz.com</a>																
	Twister 270 P2	G	110 x 110 x 105	235	365	Inc	600	N	Clip	3:45	● 1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●	Compact, piezo	49
	Twister 270 HP2	G	145 x 145 x 105	285	365	Inc	650	N	Clip	3:30	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	Piezo, wide plate burner, pressure regulator	59
Coleman Exponent USA/France <a href="http://www.coleman.com">www.coleman.com</a>																
	Outlander Micro	G	75 x 60 x 87	165	345	Inc	510	N	Screw	4:50	● 1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●●	Compact and light	40
	Feather 442 Dual Fuel	S U	150 x 120 x 120	680	Inc	230	910	N	Integral	4:00	●●●	●●	●●	●●●●	Single unit stove and tank	115
	Apex II	S K U	250 x 250 x 100	422	100	230	752	Y	Al bit	4:00	●●●	●●	●●	●●●	Optional kerosene generator	189
Gasmate Korea <a href="http://www.sitro.com.au">www.sitro.com.au</a>																
	Backpacker	G	90 x 90 x 120	200	355	Inc	555	N	Screw	4:30	●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Compact	49
	Backpacker Windshield/Piezo	G	125 x 125 x 110	280	355	Inc	635	N	Screw	4:30	●●	●●●	●●● 1/2	●●●●	Piezo, windshield around burner	59
Kovea Korea <a href="http://www.kovea.com">www.kovea.com</a>																
	Kovea Titanium ‡	G	81 x 68 x 38	88	360	Inc	448	N	Screw	4:30	●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Very light and compact, piezo	69
MSR USA/Korea <a href="http://www.msrgroup.com">www.msrgroup.com</a>																
	Pocket Rocket	G	100 x 50 x 50	86	360	Inc	446	N	Screw	3:30	●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Lightweight and small	69
	SimmerLite	S	140 x 100 x 90	240	79	230	549	Y	Al bit	3:45	●●●	●●●	●● 1/2	●●●	Simmer control	215
	Dragonfly	S K U	155 x 125 x 90	395	79	230	704	N	Al bit	3:30	●●●	●● 1/2	●	●●●	Simmer control and multifuel	289
Optimus Sweden <a href="http://www.optimus.se">www.optimus.se</a>																
	Nova	S K U D	86 x 135 x 65	420	120	230	770	Y	Al bit	3:30	●●●	●●●	●	●●	Simmer control and multifuel	310
Primus Sweden <a href="http://www.primus.se">www.primus.se</a>																
	Alpine Micro	G	75 x 50 x 85	101	355	Inc	456	N	Screw	3:00	●	●●●	●●●	●●	Lightweight and small	129
	Himalaya Varifuel	S K U D	165 x 88 x 86	424	118	230	772	Y	Al bit	3:30	●●●	●●●	●	●●●	All-purpose multifuel	249
	Omnifuel	G S K U D	150 x 88 x 85	540	118	230	888	Y	Al bit or screw	3:00	●●●	●● 1/2	●	●●●	Simmer control and multifuel (including gas)	349
Tatonka Vietnam <a href="http://www.tatonka.com">www.tatonka.com</a>																
	Multi Set	A	215 x 215 x 100	1100	Inc	565†	1665	N	Integral	10-15	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●●	Complete system with pots (two-person size)	110
Trangia Sweden <a href="http://www.trangia.se">www.trangia.se</a>																
	T 27-1 Aluminium	A	100 x 185 x 185	850	Inc	565†	1415	N	Integral	10-15	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●●	Complete system with pots (one-person size)	129
	T 25-1 Aluminium	A	105 x 220 x 220	1100	Inc	565†	1665	N	Integral	10-15	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●●	Complete system with pots (two-person size)	139

# Dimensions: Approximate length x width x height when packed. \* Stove weight: Includes burners and pumps where necessary. \*\* Fuel tank weight: For gas canisters, this figure is the weight of a full canister of gas. \*\*\* Fuel weight: Adequate fuel for two people on a two-three day trip. § Boiling time: The manufacturer's estimate of the time it takes to boil one litre of water. x Price: Does not include fuel, fuel bottles or gas cartridges unless an integral part of stove. † 450 gram fuel + 115 gram storage tank. ● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent. Fuel type: G Gas, S Shellite, K Kerosene, A Alcohol (methylated spirits), U Unleaded petrol, D Diesel. Hose: Y yes, N no. Fuel tank type: Al bit aluminium bottle, Clip gas cartridge that clips to stove, Integral tank is part of stove, Screw standard screw-on gas cartridge connection. Inc included ‡ not available § not seen by referee. The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made.



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## Liquid-fuel stoves

These stoves require regular maintenance but they'll work in almost any temperature and produce a lot of heat. Most of them operate by pumping air into the fuel tank to pressurise it. A small amount of fuel is let out into the burner and lit to pre-heat the stove. Once the stove is hot enough to enable vaporisation, the fuel valve is opened up and the stove roars away. Shellite (or Coleman fuel) is one of the most common fuels used in liquid-fuel stoves as it burns cleanly and efficiently, but take care (especially during priming) as it's also highly volatile. Unleaded petrol, leaded petrol, diesel or aviation fuel are fuels of last resort as they contain additives that can clog up stove jets and fuel lines. Kerosene is a fairly safe and efficient fuel but it's difficult to light and requires a lot of extra priming to get the stove going.

## Boil times

A lot of stoves were tested, a lot of fuel was burnt and a lot of useless data was obtained as a result. Factors affecting boil times can include fuel type, pressure in the bottle, fuel or stove dirtiness as well as stove, fuel, air- and water-temperatures. Gas- and liquid-fuel stoves take anywhere from three to five minutes to boil a litre. Metho stoves may take 10–15 minutes, so a relaxed approach to cooking is advisable. If you are mountaineering, skiing or snow-camping, a fast boil time can be preferable, if not crucial, so liquid-fuel or gas stoves (and warming tricks) are most popular. Well-fitting pot lids, good windshields, heat reflectors and even wrap-around heat exchangers can reduce boil times considerably. Ultimately, use the manufacturers' times as a rough guide but remember, small differences in boil times aren't significant.

## Stability

Regarding stability, there are two factors to look for: a wide base and wide pot-supports in relation to stove height. Most gas stoves rely on only the fuel canister for base support. Consider investing in a clip-on set of support legs. Whatever the stove, a base plate provides greater stability on uneven ground or snow (where the stove starts to sink) and is often worth the extra weight. A piece of plywood or cardboard covered in foil are simple solutions. Some manufacturers make lock-in base plates for their stoves.

## Heat control

The ideal stove allows you to vary the heat from a scorching blast of heat to a low simmer with the twist of a knob. Gas stoves tend to do this best, although some of the more advanced liquid-fuel stoves have direct flame control at the burner rather than just on the bottle. With metho stoves, most burners have a simmer ring for lowering the heat but it's difficult to raise the heat quickly.

## Quietness

It's a subjective quality but if you want the ultimate in quietness, get a metho stove. Most gas stoves are low on the decibel scale, wide-ported burners being the best. Most liquid-fuel stoves are loud but beware; some are very loud!

## Safety

No stove is completely safe, but learning how to use your stove properly and keeping it clean can avoid accidents. Liquid-fuel stoves and even gas stoves can be prone to flare-ups so give them plenty of headroom. All stoves emit gases you don't want to breathe so cooking should be carried out in well-ventilated surroundings. Don't cook in the tent! A lot of people cook in the tent vestibules and it's often the only viable place in a storm. Keep the area as ventilated as possible and be prepared for flare-ups.

## Stove weight

In the table, stove weight refers to the weight of the minimum equipment needed to operate the stove, such as the burners and pumps.

## Fuel weight

The table shows enough fuel to get two people through a weekend trip: around 230 g of gas, 230 g (300 ml) of Shellite or 230 g (330 ml) of metho. Calculating your fuel requirements will depend on the way you use your stove. Experience is the only reliable teacher. As a very rough guide, allocate around 50 g (70 ml) of Shellite, 50 g of gas or 100 g (125 ml) of metho a person a day. Double these figures for very cold weather and for melting snow.

## Tank weight

It may be worth having different sizes of gas canisters or fuel bottles to cover fuel needs on trips of different length. For longer trips, large-capacity fuel bottles or gas canisters are far more weight efficient than a number of small sizes.

## Total weight

While many stoves will work in their no-frills mode, other desirable parts—such as windshields, heat reflectors, maintenance kits and base plates—will add to the total weight. Determining which is the lightest stove system depends on the length of the trip. For short trips, a micro gas stove with a small canister is easily the lightest. On longer trips, liquid-fuel stoves can utilise fuel bottles of a much larger size than gas canisters, so they tend to be more weight efficient. Metho stoves seem heavy but considering that they come with pots and windshield, overall their weight isn't prohibitive on medium-to-long trips. You may be carrying more fuel but the actual stove is quite light and you'll probably need a windshield anyway.

## Bullet ratings

Stoves that exhibit high stability scores are those that are relatively stable at both the base and pot supports. Stoves with low scores are often small and lightweight; stability is an expected limitation. Heat control ratings reflect how well stoves regulate heat across a range of settings, especially from simmer to high output and back down again. Quiet-

## Buy right

- **End**  
Work out exactly in what sort of conditions you'll be using the stove. Liquid-fuel stoves work well in very cold weather, gas stoves need tweaking and metho stoves are slow.
- **Beware the wind**  
Buy manufacturer-made windshields and heat reflectors for your stove or cut out your own from a roll of aluminium flashing from a hardware shop.
- **Keep it upright**  
Set the stove up and place a pot on it with some weight inside. Is it easy to knock over the stove or the pot?
- **Burner size**  
A narrow burner head will deliver a blast of heat to a small area of the pot, which is good for quick boils or melting snow. A wide head will deliver broader flame coverage and often improve simmering.
- **Maintenance**  
How easy is the stove to maintain? Are there any parts (such as O-rings) that need periodic replacement?
- **Safety**  
Metho stoves are the safest, gas is relatively so and liquid-fuel stoves require most care.
- **Fuel availability overseas**  
Liquid-fuel stoves run best on Shellite but some can burn widely available fuels like petrol or kero. Metho and gas canisters can be hard to find.
- **Fuel cost**  
Gas is expensive, Shellite moderately so and metho is cheap even though you'll be using more of it.
- **Flying**  
Airlines won't let you carry fuels of any type. If you thoroughly clean your stove and empty fuel bottles, you might be okay; it depends on the airline.

ness, a comfort factor rather than a performance indicator, was determined over a range of heat settings; the loudest stoves received the lowest scores. Value was determined by price in relation to features offered for the 'average bushwalker'. Some of the lower-scoring stoves would be of greater value to those with more specialist needs, such as lightweight walks or high-altitude gourmet cooking. 🍌

Scott Edwards believes that one can never get bored waking up to a fresh winter snowfall on top of Mt Bogong with a stove-brewed espresso on hand. At present he is working as a ranger at Wilsons Promontory, Victoria, until the snow falls again.

This survey was referred by Jim Graham.





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Aluminium Bugaboo™ cook-sets are light and the Teflon interior coating makes cleaning a breeze! The sets nest compactly and the lids act as fry pans.

DiamondBack Gripper™ and mesh storage-bag included.

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Glacier Stainless Steel™ cook-sets are finely crafted culinary pieces for the practising gourmet and are crafted from 18/8 stainless steel. The mirror-bright finish looks great! All pieces have rounded corners for easy cleaning and serving. The sets nest compactly and the lids



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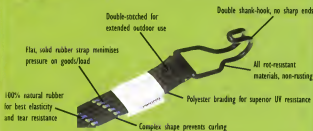


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## E-mail from the coldest place on earth

-----Original Message-----

From: sel\_pea@mawson.aad.gov.au (Mawson Station-  
Antarctica) [mailto:sel\_pea@mawson.aad.gov.au]  
Sent: Friday, 10 January 2003 12:41  
To: Craig Cobbin -Helly Hansen (Brand Manager- Australasia)  
Subject: Helly Hansen Performance

Hello Craig,

regards the Helly Hansen products I really know that these products work extremely well and would back them 100%, as they made such a difference to working outside after using the other clothing supplied by the Antarctic Division.

My only regret is that I didn't have them earlier.

Thanks for the great product support Craig, and the effort of getting them to Hobart on time to catch the ship sailing down to Antarctica.

Cheers  
Selwyn

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**TAS** Jolly Swagman's Camping World, 03 6234 3999. **VIC** Bogong Equipment, 03 9600 0599;

Mountain Equipment Melbourne, 03 9671 4554; Outsports Frankston, 03 9783 2079;

Outsports Moorabbin, 03 9532 5337; The Wilderness Shop, 03 9898 3742.

**WA** MainPeak Cottlesloe, 08 9385 2552; MainPeak Perth, 08 9322 9044, MainPeak Subiaco, 08 9388 9072.



# GPS receivers

John Poppins puts eight models through their paces

## ALL GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS)

units have similar features, based on their ability to store 'waypoints', 'routes', 'tracks' and to find one's way back to these. The major differences between models are:

- the **display** (ranging from character information to display of a map showing waypoints, routes and tracks, and background mapping,
- the size of the **memory** in which background mapping is stored, and
- additional **features** such as a sensitive electronic compass and barometer.

Since the last *Wild* field test (issue 78) there have been continuing improvements in GPS units for bushwalking. Price-performance has improved. The addition of large memories to some models and of map databases made available on CD-ROM have made trip preparation much easier for those who use a computer link.

Altitude calculated by a GPS is less accurate than position. Several models include a sensitive electronic barometric altimeter to improve accuracy and warn of weather changes.

All current models can be upgraded by obtaining new software releases from the maker's Web site, improving value with age.

All units tested provide for standard Australian and important international datums.



## Buy right

- Check for attractive deals that include options at little extra cost.
- As an emergency device the basic eTrex is attractive.
- For heavy and professional use, the larger and more expensive units present difficult choices, each with different benefits.
- The tested units all process data from up to 12 satellites simultaneously. When considering second-hand units bear in mind that any which process less than five satellites simultaneously will not perform well under trees.
- Computer software has become much easier to install and use, significantly enhancing capability. Software and data availability may determine your choice.

## So, what is the use of a GPS?

- To assist with navigation to a desired location.
- To confirm a current position on the map. When you are not distracted, visibility is good, and the terrain has distinctive contours, it is usually faster and more invigorating to

*The track notes will get you only so far. Perhaps she needs a GPS. (Somewhere near Mt Capricorn, Western Arthur Range, South-west Tasmania.) Karl Landorf*

navigate by map, compass and observation. However, a GPS gives you freedom to focus on other issues such as photography, botany, or survival in severe conditions or featureless terrain.

To realise this advantage preplanning is necessary. Time will need to be spent keying in positions or transferring them from CD-ROM through a personal computer.

The fundamental accuracy of GPS units is such that they will give position to well within 15 metres 95 per cent of the time. Users needing higher precision can buy additional equipment and subscribe to broadcast correction signals which can improve their accuracy to within five metres ('Differential GPS' or IDGPSII). A new system, Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS), only partially implemented at present, has been introduced to give similar results without extra equipment. It has been developed to assist automatic aircraft landing, and relies on additional satellites that broadcast supplementary correction signals. These signals are not available in Australia at present. The

Magellan and the Garmin units are capable of using WAAS.

Bushwalking and ski-touring group leaders should consider carrying a light, low-cost unit as a safety item in case of whiteout or severe geographic embarrassment.

The Web site [gisinformation.net](http://gisinformation.net) and news-group [sci.geo.satellite-nav](mailto:sci.geo.satellite-nav) are valuable resources.

## The field tests

GPS units are complex devices, with variations in features likely to suit different buyers. Each model has specific strengths; no one model has them all.

All tested units work well under open skies, establishing position within the times given in the specifications, and accuracy well within 15 metres of a known survey point.

Field testing requires familiarisation with menu structures followed by several tests including:

- accuracy against a known survey mark,
- sensitivity to changes of direction,





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**SporTrak Pro** • 9MB Australian Base Map of cities, towns, suburbs, highways, main roads, waterways, parks, coastline, with additional 2MB of memory for downloading detailed maps & points of interest from Hogenland Streets software.



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## GPS receivers

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www.garmin.com

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www.magellangps.com

**Silva**  
UK  
www.silva.se



Model	Pro-Trek	GPS 72	eTrex	eTrex Vista	SporTrak Map	SporTrak Pro	Meridian Series	Multi-Navigator
RRP, \$	899	495	389	1129	575	875	699 to 999	795
Weight, grams	80 + 200 cradle	230	150	150	170	170	227	254
Size, millimetres	60 x 49 x 21 (watch)	158 x 69 x 30	112 x 51 x 30	112 x 51 x 30	142 x 56 x 29	142 x 56 x 29	165 x 74 x 31	170 x 61 x 30
Batteries	6 x AAA in cradle	2 x AA	2 x AA	2 x AA	2 x AA	2 x AA	2 x AA	2 x AA
Battery life	70 min x 5 recharges	Up to 16 hrs (saver mode)	Up to 22 hrs (saver mode)	Up to 12 hrs (saver mode)	Up to 15 hrs cont	Up to 14 hrs cont	Up to 14 hrs cont	Up to 10 hrs cont 100 hrs compass
Warm start	2 min	45 sec	Not tested	45 sec	30 sec	45 sec	Not tested	45 sec
Hot start	1 min	<10 sec	Not tested	15 sec	<10 sec	<10 sec	Not tested	<10 sec
Waypoints	200, 16 characters	500, 10 characters	500, 10 characters	500, 10 characters	500, 6 characters	500, 8 characters	500, 8 characters	1000, 8 characters
Comments	No	No	No	No	20 characters	28 characters	30 characters	No
Routes	Yes	50 with 50 legs	1 with 50 legs	20 with 50 legs	20 with 30 legs	20 with 30 legs	20 with 30 legs	10 with 100 legs
Tracks	1 with 400 points	10 tracks	10 tracks	10 with 3000 points	1 with 2000 points	1 with 2000 points	1 with 2000 points	1 with 5000 points
Remember go to	Not tested	Yes	No	No	No	Routes only	Routes only	Yes
Accuracy enhance	No	WAAS	WAAS, DGPS	WAAS, DGPS	WAAS, DGPS	WAAS, DGPS	WAAS, DGPS	DGPS
Man overboard	No	Yes	No	No	Yes (route)	No	No	Yes
Database	No	1 mb	No	24 mb map	Major cities + 1 mb	9 mb + 23 mb map	Memory cards	No
Display	21 x 18 mm	41 x 56 mm 120 x 160 pixels	27 x 54 mm 64 x 128 pixels	27 x 54 mm 160 x 288 pixels	35 x 54 mm 160 x 104 pixels	35 x 54 mm 160 x 104 pixels	43 x 56 mm 160 x 120 pixels	43 x 68 mm character display
Est position error	Yes, satellite display	Yes, satellite display	Yes, satellite display	Yes, satellite display	Yes, position display	Yes, position display	Yes, position display	No
Alarms	GPS fix, arrival	Arrival, anchor, off-course, GPS fix, proximity	No	No	Arrival, anchor, off-course, GPS fix, proximity	Arrival, anchor, off-course, GPS fix	Arrival, anchor, off-course, GPS fix	No sound, flashing message for GPS fix
Compass	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Platinum model only	Yes
Barometric altimeter	No	No	No	Yes, accuracy ±3 m	No	No	Platinum model only	Yes, accuracy ±3 m
Sundry features	Daylight-saving time	Area within track, floats		Area within track	Save WPT to route, floats	Save WPT to route, floats	Save WPT to route, floats	Area within route
Software upgrade	Yes, v 2.01	Yes	Yes	Yes, version not shown	Yes, v 1.06	Yes, v 3.02	Yes	Yes, v 2.14
Accessories	Manual, lanyard	Manual, lanyard	Manual, lanyard	Manual, lanyard, PC data cable	Manual on CD, lanyard	Manual on CD, lanyard, PC data cable	Manual, PC data cable	Manual, lanyard, carry case, car mount kit
Options	Carry case \$31 cig lighter cable \$50 PC data cable \$85 pwr & data cable \$104 mounting cradle \$78	Carry case \$40 cig lighter cable \$96 PC data cable \$93 pwr & data cable \$119 mounting cradle \$76	Carry case \$40 cig lighter cable \$96	Carry case \$40 cig lighter cable \$96 pwr & data cable \$119 mounting cradle \$76	Carry case \$29 cig lighter cable \$63 pwr & data cable \$112	Carry case \$29 cig lighter cable \$63	Carry case \$29 cig lighter cable \$63 mem card 16 mb \$90 mem card 32 mb \$143 mem card 64 mb \$248	PC data cable \$99 pwr & data cable \$124
Software	Data transfer free from Internet	Mapsource CD \$233	Mapsource CD \$233	Mapsource CD \$233	DataSend Aust \$149	MapSend streets for each State \$149	MapSend streets for each State \$149	Global Map Planner \$20
Temperatures		-15°-70° C	-15°-70° C	-15°-70° C	-10°-60° C	-10°-60° C	-10°-60° C	-25°-70° C
External power	240 volt power pack	8-35 volts	12 volts	12 volts	9-35 volts	9-35 volts	9-35 volts	6-28 volts

**Footnotes are in the order the items appear in the table.** **Battery life:** Varies widely, depending on method of use. From supplier's specifications. **Warm start:** Time to establish position when not used for two hours. **Hot start:** Time to establish position after being turned off for one to two minutes. **Tested:** Landmarks, destinations, turning-points, or features to be avoided are all stored in the unit with names. A few can store additional information as **Comments** (eg time and date, or a phone number for a hospital). **Route:** An ordered group of waypoints making up a route, which can be activated for travel forward or back. **Tracks:** A "bread crumb" trace of the user's route, for retracing forward or back. **Remember go to:** Does the unit remember the last go to point when turned on again (saves time and battery power)? **Accuracy enhance:** Does the unit support methods of improving accuracy to within five metres? **Man overboard:** A fast method of saving and using a point to be returned to immediately. **Databases:** Size of storage for maps. **Display:** The size, type and number of pixels available to display the map. **Estimated position error (EPE):** A computed geometric error dependent on the number and location of the satellites being tracked. Additional errors can result from other causes, such as atmospheric conditions and reflections, so this figure should be treated as optimistic. **Alarms:** Some units allow the setting of alarms warning of arrival at destination, proximity to a turning-point or danger or deviation too far off course (Cross Track Error or XTE). Alarms may be displayed and/or audible. Audible alarms attract attention. **Compass:** An inbuilt electronic magnetic compass. **Altimeter:** An inbuilt barometric altimeter allowing more accurate monitoring of climbs and weather. A more accurate altitude can be used to improve position accuracy. **Sundry features:** Does the unit float in water? Can the unit calculate areas within boundaries? **Software upgrade:** Can the internal program be upgraded from the Internet (the version of the unit tested is given)? **Accessories:** Supplied with the unit. **Options:** Available at extra cost. **Software:** Some of the programs and mapping data available to use with the GPS and a computer. **Temperatures:** Operating temperature range. **External power:** Voltage which can be supplied through the supplier's external power cable. **The country listed after the manufacturer's name is where the product is made.**



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- tenacity when carried into dense forest in damp conditions, and
- attempt to restart under dense forest in damp conditions.

## Results

All units tested, with the exception of the Casio wrist-watch, performed well in dense forest. Attempts to warm start under wet, dense forest can still defeat all units. The Magellan SporTrak Pro proved the most tenacious under heavy forest, a strength that Magellan could not explain as it has the same antenna and electronics as the basic SporTrak.

All the hand-held units tested offer large-character display options to make them easier to read without spectacles. All are waterproof, and the celestial functions sunrise/sunset are now standard; most units add moonrise/moonset times.

**Lowrance** units are again available in Australia, from marine suppliers. See [www.lowrance.com](http://www.lowrance.com) or phone 1800 650 629.

### Casio's Pro-Trek

A wrist-watch and a GPS in one; this remarkable feat of miniaturisation can locate its position and guide you to your destination as accurately as larger, hand-held GPS units. Its weakness is that it will operate only in very open situations, with no foliage or buildings nearby. It is also slow to locate itself when started. After about an hour of continuous use it must be recharged from its external battery pack or the mains. These limitations mean that it is unlikely to suit most bushwalkers. As it automatically updates time from the atomic clocks of the satellites it provides an extraordinarily accurate time, as do all GPS units.

### Garmin eTrex

This basic GPS (tested for issue 78) is the smallest, lightest GPS unit suitable for bushwalking, and is attractively priced at \$389. It is light to carry, great for emergency location. Its innovative button placement works well. It is a little slower to locate itself than the new Garmin GPS-72, the Magellans and the Silva. There are no audible warnings, it relies on displayed messages. There is no user adjustment for proximity to a waypoint as a route is followed.

### eTrex Vista

Adds a higher resolution display, an electronic compass and barometric altimeter into the same small package as the eTrex. It also adds a large map memory that can be pre-loaded with detailed background maps purchasable on CD-ROM. These detailed maps are the same as those loaded to automotive guidance systems. The detailed mapping could not be tested because of third-party licensing requirements.

### Garmin GPS-72

A newly released budget-priced unit with a large display and sufficient volume to float in water. With an antenna that performs

best when held upright, it is easy to read the display without reflections when the unit is fixed on a car dashboard. Its large, well-designed display layout has particularly good options for large print. It provides excellent features for setting alarm distances from waypoints. It is comparable to others in the time it takes to establish a two-dimensional position but sometimes slower to reach a three-dimensional position. The GPS-76 series, not tested, is aimed at vehicle-based markets, adding greater display resolution and mapping capability.

### Magellan SporTrak

All Magellan GPS units have an upright antenna and large-print options, again well suited to sitting on the car dashboard. All float in water. All Magellans allow the saving of waypoints directly into a route, saving keystrokes. They are also unique in allowing comments to be entered into memory with each waypoint saved.

The SporTrak range, of which the basic and the top model were tested, is aimed at bushwalkers. When standing, the SporTrak automatically begins averaging position fixes, further improving accuracy. It saves and transfers altitude, time and date, as well as position, to and from a computer. The built-in city database includes regional cities.

### Magellan SporTrak Map and Pro

These models allow longer waypoint names and comments. With a large map memory, they provide for storage and display of detailed street maps loaded from the MapSend CD-ROM. Magellan shines for the amount of work it has put into developing Australian map databases for each State, available at modest cost on CD-ROM. The level of detail is astonishing. The surveyor selected an area of Victoria from well to the west of Melbourne to beyond Sale in Gippsland, from Lake Eildon south to Wilsons Promontory, and transferred all data for this area to the GPS, using about five megabytes of the 23-megabyte map memory. Driving in west Gippsland, the GPS showed which side of the divided highway the car was on (the left, of course). All side roads and even private driveways were accurately shown, matching the VicMap 1:25 000 scale maps.

### Magellan Meridian Series

This range—not tested—is similar to the SporTrak Pro but has a bigger display and expandable map memory, at slightly greater cost, weight and bulk.

### Silva MultiNavigator

This unit combines the GPS with a sensitive electronic compass and barometric altimeter. It is notable for features designed to minimise battery-power consumption on long trips. The use of a character display rather than a plotted-map display permits operation in more severe temperatures. Its clever menu structure is designed to allow the GPS to be turned off for long intervals, using the much more frugal electronic compass in the intervals to provide substantial

economies in battery usage. When turned on it remembers the last-used go-to point. This saves time, keystrokes and battery power.

The buttons are well spaced for use with gloves. Area calculation uses a route as boundary. This is more efficient and controllable than the use of a track. The Silva computer software enables you to scan

## Tips for use

- All the tested units allow the power-hungry satellite tracking to be turned off while keying in and checking waypoints and routes, calling this demo or simulator mode. This mode can be used to test a route without actually going into the field.
- Heavy tree cover—especially when foliage is wet with rain or snow—blocks most of the satellite signals. If you try to start your GPS deep in the forest it may be unable to pick up sufficient signals to 'locate' itself. Plan ahead, starting the GPS in open terrain a few minutes before moving into the forest. This lets it find all available satellites and decide which combination gives the lowest estimated position error (EPE). Once it has an accurate position the unit should then 'hang in' with scraps of data that penetrate the forest canopy. If conditions are still a challenge, reduce speed or make short stops to allow more chance to regain a 'fix'.
- A car-power-cable accessory is valuable, saving batteries en route.
- Carry fresh batteries; older batteries may be adequate for a quick test but not for sustained use.
- All GPS units use power even when turned off. When storing the instrument it is wise to remove the batteries until they are next needed. All the tested units retain saved waypoints indefinitely.
- Carry good maps and an orienteering compass in case of battery failure.
- All units claim to be waterproof to recognised standards; some will float. Nevertheless, it is either brave or foolish to risk an expensive electronic instrument in water.
- The satellites are always moving; there may be occasional short periods when either insufficient satellites are 'visible' or the satellites are too badly placed to give an accurate or even any position fix, especially when the view of the sky is limited. The display of satellite-position signal-strength and the EPE help us to understand when this is happening.

your existing paper maps and develop a database to suit your specific needs. The warranty is for two years. 📍

*John Poppins is an engineer, a computer controller of machine tools, a traveller, a bushwalker, a skier, an investor and a small farmer. Today he is more concerned by our catchment, forests, Landcare, WaterWatch and ethical shareholders' groups. He uses GPS units to confirm his position on 'bushwalks' around logging coupes.*

This field test was referred by Roger Coffin





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## Mountain phoenix

While its elastic-sided riding boots may have passed into contemporary fashion folklore (and at only about 50 bucks a pair, no wonder!) 133-year-old Tasmanian footwear manufacturer **Blundstone** hasn't shod serious bushwalkers' feet since your father's (make that your grandfather's) day. Until now, that is. The **Mountain Master (style no 480) walking boot** is claimed to be 'built for serious action. Xtreme footwear for life'. Indeed, the sample we inspected appeared to match the hyperbole. (Blundstone made the original Mountain Masters for farmers after the Second World War but they were discontinued about 30 years ago.) RRP \$150.



*Blundstone  
Mountain Master boots.*

It never rains but it pours in Tassie! Not being content with just a new walking boot, Blundstone has also introduced a Mountain Master sport sandal that carries the prosaic name **The Sandal**. With suede strapping and 'aggressive' sole pattern it's more aesthetically appealing than many sport sandals.

Gordon All Terrain sandals enjoy something of a minor cult following. The latest **Gordon** offering is its **Super Thong** which, as the name implies, is a cross between a thong and a sport sandal. RRP \$45. Distributed by **Minian Pty Ltd**, email [gordon@minian.com.au](mailto:gordon@minian.com.au)

Not to be left out of the **sport-sandal** two-step, the **Lizard Lynx** is a fully-featured, Italian-made sandal which is claimed to give superior attachment to the foot even in white water. RRP \$199. Phone **Outdoor Agencies** on (02) 9438 2266 for stockists.

## Down a lazy river

**Coleman's** new **Inflatable Kayak** is claimed to be one of the toughest on the market with 30-gauge PVC on the bottom and 23-gauge PVC on top. Included are a cargo net, tracking fins to assist paddling stability, inflatable back rests and aluminium paddle. A new valve is said to allow speedy inflation, and the kayak is guaranteed not to leak! RRP \$169. Phone Coleman, 1800 224 350.

## Is that a fire in your pocket?



*MSR SimmerLite stove.*

The push for ever lighter and more compact gear continues with **MSR's** latest offering, the **SimmerLite**, claimed to be the smallest and lightest liquid-fuel stove, but looking more like some form of miniature lunar-landing module. It has a minimum weight of just 240 grams, and is included in the Gear Survey on page 61. RRP \$215. Phone **Sea to Summit** on 1800 787 677 for stockists.

## Knick-Knacks

\* The 2003 range of Germany's **Deuter** **rucksacks** includes its **Air Contact Lite** models that range from 25 to 60 litres claimed capacity. This year's models have been lightened, with the largest weighing 1800 grams. RRP \$140-280. Distributed by **Velo-Vita**, phone (02) 9695 7744.

*Deuter Air  
Contact Lite  
rucksack.*



\* With GPS technology advancing in leaps and bounds (see the Field Test on page 69), it's hard to keep pace with the latest thing, let alone understand it! But the

## trix

### Going light with your Trangia stove

Anthony Dunk

I've been an owner of a Trangia stove for more than ten years and would agree wholeheartedly with the company's claims regarding the stoves, except the one about it being lightweight. All those years ago I bought a large, stainless steel/aluminium Trangia T25 stove and have been lugging around 1.3 kilograms of metal ever since! I therefore decided to see whether there was any way to reduce the stove weight.

I found a design which gives short boil times, good fuel efficiency, and performs adequately in windy conditions. The new design attempts to imitate some features of the classic Trangia windshield design but reduce the weight and size as much as possible. My pot stand weighs 140 grams compared to 350 grams for the original, and my design boils a litre of water in about a minute less than with Trangia's (in calm conditions).

The pot stand consists of two pieces—a base with air-intake holes and a top piece with four tabs to support the pot. Tabs on the lower part lock into slots on the upper part. The two pieces of the stand can be 'unplugged' and placed inside the cooking pan when not in use. The bottom piece is made from the top of a cheap aluminium billy (with handle removed) and the top piece is a galvanised iron down-pipe section. The total cost is about \$10.

To use the stand, the metho burner is placed on a level patch of ground and the two pieces of the pot stand are lowered

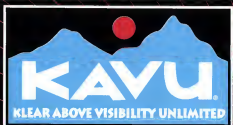


over it. The burner is lit and then a pot is placed on the stand. If the simmer-ring is needed, it can be placed on the burner in a half-open position.

Why a two-piece design rather than one simple piece? My investigations showed that increasing the distance between the burner and the bottom of the pot reduced boil time significantly. But the problem was that this distance required a pot-stand too big to fit neatly inside the cooking pot. The solution was obvious—make two pieces that can be easily assembled when you want to cook. The choice of materials was dictated by the fact that in earlier prototypes the aluminium at the top of the pot stand softened after repeated firings.

*Wild* welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.





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**Magellan Meridian Color GPS**, with the first full colour display in a hand-held GPS, is worthy of comment. It has a 16-colour, 120 x 160 pixel back-lit display and weighs 227 grams. RRP \$1,485. Call Magellan on 1800 644 033 for stockists.

- \* **WX Tex** is a relatively new brand making a range of dry bags and the like including its **Pneumo Dry Sack** range with an air-bleeder valve making each bag 'a sort of combo compression sack/dry bag/pillow', according to the distributor (**Sea to Summit**). Sizes from five to 50 litres (RRP \$30 to \$60).
- \* Equipment in **Wild** no 85 announced the arrival of warmer and more compact Polartec Thermal Pro fleece fabrics. **Cigana Mountain Wear** (phone (02) 6452 5417) has incorporated them into its range: for men there is the **High Loft Jacket** and for women the **Mercury Jacket**. Both have a RRP of \$199 and are said to suit 'the serious adventurer', whoever he or she might be! For the less serious, Cigana has introduced its **Crew Neck Pullover** with knitted-jumper-look exterior. RRP \$129.
- \* **Leatherman's** well-known and sassy Juice **multitool** has been miniaturised as the **Squirt**, and is available in two forms, **P4** and **S4**. RRP \$99.95. Distributed by **Sheldon and Hammond**, phone (02) 9482 6634, and **Zen Imports**, phone 1800 064 200.

- \* The **SIGG Hydro-Tube** is described by the distributor, **Outdoor Agencies**, as a 'new product that converts any SIGG bottle into a tube-style hydrator'. It has a lockable top and can be dismantled for cleaning. RRP \$39.95.



SIGG Hydro-Tube.

- \* **Tool Logic** has developed a series of three survival tools called **Light, Fire** and **Water**. Each weighs 65 grams and incorporates a serrated knife-blade and emergency whistle. Depending on model, they also include a torch, waterproof cavity or fire-starter. RRP \$99 each. For stockists phone **Zen Imports**.
- \* **Trek & Travel** is the name of what is claimed to be 'Australia's first outdoor and adventure travel store for women' that opened at Shop 34, Town Hall Arcade, Sydney on 1 November.

New and innovative products of relevance to the ruck-sack sports (on loan to **Wild**) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to **Wild**, PO Box 145, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: wild@wild.com.au

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## Victorian election catapults forest campaign towards major conservation gains



*The message to government is clear. (Protesters during the Victorian election campaign.) All photos Eli Greig*

Environmental issues played a major role in the lead-up to the 30 November poll, and forest policy received enormous media coverage and attention from all political parties.

Policy commitments levered from the Bracks Government are a step forward in Victoria's forest campaign which, conservationists hope, is now set for major gains in the critical areas of the protection of old-growth forests and water catchments, particularly for Melbourne.

In its next term of government, Bracks has pledged to: protect the Otway Ranges in a new 15 000 hectares National Park by 2008; prohibit the burning of native forest for charcoal and electricity generation; and negotiate an end to wood-chipping the Wombat Forest by the end of the year.

This is on top of pre-election commitments by Bracks including: the protection of 12 000 hectare box-ironbark forests in new National Parks; the reduction of saw-log licence volumes by more than 30 per cent, in particular an end to logging in the Cobbabonne Forests in the State's far west; and investigating the protection of old-growth forests in Goolengook through the Victorian Environment Assessment Council.

It is unclear whether the reduction in saw-log licences will actually reduce logging rates because wood-chipping (the major cause of forest destruction) may simply continue unchecked. Moreover, without a programme to protect high-conservation-value forests, the reduced logging levels may still occur in those of our forests that

are most pristine and important for biodiversity.

The Goolengook decision may not actually add this unique area of old-growth forest to the adjacent Errinundra National Park but merely quarantine small patches from logging.

*Cavan McFadzean, The Wilderness Society*



*Melbourne's Arts Centre spire during the election campaign.*

## Wilderness icon alert

Tasmanian National Parks are under threat of accommodation developments, not only in National Parks, but also in the World Heritage Area. The re-elected Labor Government removed the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Division from the Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment (DPIWE) and placed it under the Tourism Department, with the Nature Conservation Branch remaining at DPIWE. This has caused concern in the community.

Tasmanian National Parks are being targeted as areas for exclusive tourism developments. A proposal for Planters Beach in the South-west National Park has been given approval. The development of 80 cabins, a tavern, and spa baths in the sand-dunes, extends the road—which at present finishes at Cockle Creek—a further 800 metres into the park. Despite strong opposition from both the Aboriginal community and Bob Brown, the Planning Tribunal gave it the go-ahead and the WHA Management Plan was specifically altered to allow it! The developer is yet to begin work on the ground; so the campaign against development continues.

The latest proposal (that has council approval, but awaits ministerial approval) seeks to use the beautiful Pumphouse Point on the southern shores of Lake St Clair, within both the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park and the World Heritage Area boundaries. The developer intends to build a 60-bed-room accommodation complex, bistro bar, restaurant and boat jetty for the 100-seat boat for Lake St Clair. This approval contradicts the WHA Management Plan objectives.

*Heather Kirpatrick*

### ▲ Act now

**Encourage the Premier to say no to the Pumphouse Point development, and other developments within National Parks: Premier Jim Bacon, email [premier@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:premier@dpac.tas.gov.au)**

## Buy back the bush

Nestled in the Macleay Gorges of northern NSW, Green Gully is the last stronghold of the threatened brush-tailed rock wallaby. The 13 000 hectares of identified wilderness, old-growth open woodland and World Heritage-listed dry rainforest provide refuge for threatened wildlife including glossy black cockatoos, regent honey-eaters and tiger quolls. The Dunphy Wilderness Fund is asking for donations to help to buy the property linking isolated sections of Oxley Wild



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The TNPA gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Conservation Alliance.  
[www.conservationsalliance.org.au](http://www.conservationsalliance.org.au)

Rivers National Park to form the Macleay Gorges Wilderness Area.

### Act now

To make a tax-deductible donation for the purchase of Green Gully, contact the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, phone (02) 9221 1949 or visit [www.fnwp.com.au](http://www.fnwp.com.au)

## Wood-chips

- The World Meteorological Organisation's announcement that 2002 was the second-hottest year on record confirms fears about climate change. Kate Hampton, Climate Change Campaigner at Friends of the Earth (FOE) International, said: 'These figures are further evidence that burning fossil fuels is causing massive changes to the atmosphere and affecting our climate. If we do not cut emissions fast, increasingly frequent and severe storms, droughts and floods are likely to threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of people throughout the globe.'
- Akzo Nobel has cancelled plans to participate in the construction of a controversial pulp factory on the Indonesian island of Kalimantan. Identified by FOE Netherlands as not taking their corporate responsibilities in foreign countries seriously, the company withdrew from the project which would have required 50 000 hectares of tropical rainforest to be cut down and replaced with plantations to supply the factory with wood pulp.
- The November issue of the *Colony Bulletin* reports that the New South Wales and Federal Governments made a joint purchase of 350 000 hectares of new National Parks in western NSW. The Mungo National Park has been tripled in size to 89 000 hectares. This and other areas, including the new 230 000 hectare Paroo-Darling National Park, increases the land reserved to 1.75 million hectares.
- The *Washington Post* and *New York Times* have reported that a panel of top scientists denounced Danish author Bjorn Lomborg for 'scientific dishonesty'. Lomborg concluded in his best-selling 1999 book *The Skeptical Environmentalist* that 'air and water around us are becoming less and less polluted. Mankind's lot has actually improved in terms of practically every measurable indicator'. The scientists criticised him for 'one-sidedness in the choice of data and line of argument'.
- Human Rights Watch (HRW) is concerned by the excessive force Cambodian police used on peaceful environmental advocates at the Department of Forestry & Wildlife in Phnom Penh on 5 December. Eyewitnesses report that police kicked, shoved and hit the advocates with electric-shock batons. 'It appears that the government wants to put an end to grass-roots movements of villagers who

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are informed and concerned about national forestry policies and the ongoing illegal logging in their communities', said Mike Jendrzeczyk, Washington Director of the Asia Division at HRW.

least 100 million native animals, birds and reptiles died each year as a result of **land clearing**, and trees were disappearing at a rate of 190 million each year reported the *Age* on 28 January. The Queensland

this will be monitored to ensure that 'waste' is not produced for power generation. Even so, this is a great win for the forests of NSW.

- In November, *Wilderness News* reported that after 13 months of campaigning against **Australian Silicon's** proposed development of a **charcoal factory on NSW's south coast**, campaigners celebrated the end of the battle. Australian Silicon informed the Australian Stock Exchange that the Board have resolved that funds are better utilised improving the overall project parameters and not pursuing a lengthy legal battle.
- Legislation was passed late October to protect 105 000 hectares of the **Victorian box-ironbark** woodlands in new or expanded parks and reserves. This is one of the biggest wins for the conservation of Victoria since Mallee parks were created in north-west Victoria in 1989. The newly created parks and reserves will provide homes for threatened species such as the regent honey-eater, swift parrot and squirrel glider.
- On 7 January the *Age* reported that Acting Premier John Thwaites said **wood-chipping in the Wombat Forest** had ended. The announcement came as part of a Department of Sustainability & Environment review of the timber-harvesting arrangements for the north-west Melbourne region and included the



## You can bank on it?

- The November issue of *Wilderness News* reported that on 1 November **shareholders** resolved to **stop the Commonwealth Bank investing in the logging of old-growth forests**. A group of shareholders concerned by the bank's 16 per cent stake in Tasmanian logging company, Gunns Ltd, put forward the resolution. The resolution was supported by 94 million shares out of a total share pool of 413 million, gaining the greatest support for a shareholder resolution in Australia's corporate history.
- On 6 November the *Age* reported that **Tim Winton** and **Richard Flanagan** had withdrawn their entries for the \$40 000 Tasmania Pacific Fiction Prize in **protest over old-growth logging in Tasmania**. They joined a boycott of one of Australia's richest literary prizes because an arts festival linked to the prize was sponsored by the State timber agency, Forestry Tasmania. Early last year Winton donated a \$25 000 literary prize to halt development on the coral Ningaloo Reef.
- Salinity hazard maps for **Queensland's Fitzroy River** catchment, published in November, have prompted the Australian Conservation Foundation to renew calls to reduce land clearing. The publication of these maps was followed by a Queensland Government report showing that at



Government also released satellite images show that the equivalent of 18 football fields has been cleared each day between 1999 and 2001.

- In late August, after environmentalists had spent three years of campaigning against the burning of native-forest timber for electricity, Bob Carr announced that no **wood-fired power stations** will be built in **NSW** and that wood-fired power will not be sold as green electricity in the State. However, under the policy, 'saw-mill waste' may be used in power generation and there are no details about how

decision for the neighbouring community to take over management.

- Figures published by Newspoll in October show that support for the **environment** was a **top priority for voters**. Sixty-nine per cent of people polled rated the environment as a very important issue—support has not been as great as this since 1994. ●

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email [wild@wild.com.au](mailto:wild@wild.com.au)





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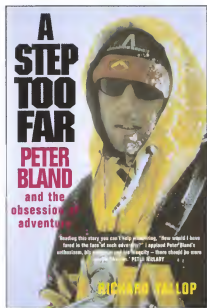




## A Step Too Far

by Richard Yallop (Macmillan, 2002, RRP \$30).

In January 2001 Peter Bland plunged 40 metres into a crevasse just 12 kilometres short of completing a crossing of the Antarctic Peninsula. The story of this expedition and the subsequent rescue, frame this account of Bland's driven, restless life as a



sailor and polar traveller. Though lacking the compelling immediacy of an autobiography, the fast-paced story constructed by journalist Richard Yallop probes into Bland's childhood, his relationships with family and friends as well as his history of heart surgery to reveal the forces behind his craving for adventure.

Quentin Chester

## Shooting the Franklin

by Johnson Dean (JF & S Dean, 2002, RRP \$40 paperback, \$60 hardback).

Like Huck Finn on steroids, the author and his friends pioneered canoeing on Tasmania's wildest rivers—culminating in attempts on the Franklin.

They took guns, dynamite and canoes they had made themselves down an unexplored river.

There were two unsuccessful epics, with wrecked canoes, lives narrowly saved and long marches to safety, before—having surmounted numerous hazards—they completed the first successful descent of the Franklin in 1958–59.

*Shooting the Franklin* incorporates adventures on other rivers including the King, Pieman and Gordon. The author teamed up with people like Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis to make some of these trips.

## Primal Places

by Chris Bell (Laurel Press, 2002, RRP \$75).

Tasmania's leading wilderness photographers, exemplified by the late Peter Dombrovskis, have a long, proud tradition of producing breathtaking publications. For many years Chris Bell has been an outstanding example of this select group. *Primal Places*, his latest offering, is right 'up there' with the best of the best.

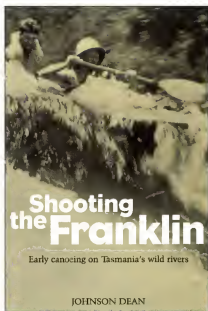
Subject matter is divided into three sections: 'Headwaters', 'Shorelines' and 'Islands'. Photography and production are superb throughout. The brief text complements the moods created by the masterful photography which itself covers a rich variety of subjects.

Those who value wilderness—particularly Tasmania's unique form of it—will want to turn to *Primal Places* over and again for inspiration. They are unlikely to be disappointed.

Chris Baxter



When Bob Brown bought his little white farmhouse at Liffey he had not yet rafted the Franklin and he would not know until years later that the man who sold it to him, Johnson Dean, had been an early pioneer of the river.



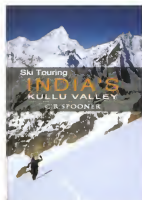
The book is well illustrated with photos and fine drawings. The adventurer's innocence and determination make the book a delight to read. For anyone interested in the dramas of the Franklin River, it's a must.

Brian Walters

## Ski Touring India's Kullu Valley

by CR Spooner (Alpine Touring Publishing, 2002, RRP \$32.95).

This new cross-country ski guidebook, a six-year labour of love from Campbell Spooner, is the first published guide to India's Kullu valley in the State of Himachal Pradesh. It



conveys the unique flavour of this extensive world-class touring region while providing a mountain (pun intended!) of detailed information, clear location maps and enticing photos. A must for any Telemark aficionado looking for superb skiing and new horizons. ☺

Greg Caire

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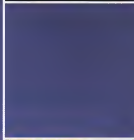
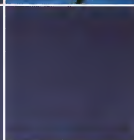
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**Deadlines:**  
15 January (winter issue),  
15 April (winter),  
15 July (spring),  
8 October (summer).

Advertisements will be inserted in the first available issue.

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